OLD BRIG'S CARGO

Henry A. Pulsford

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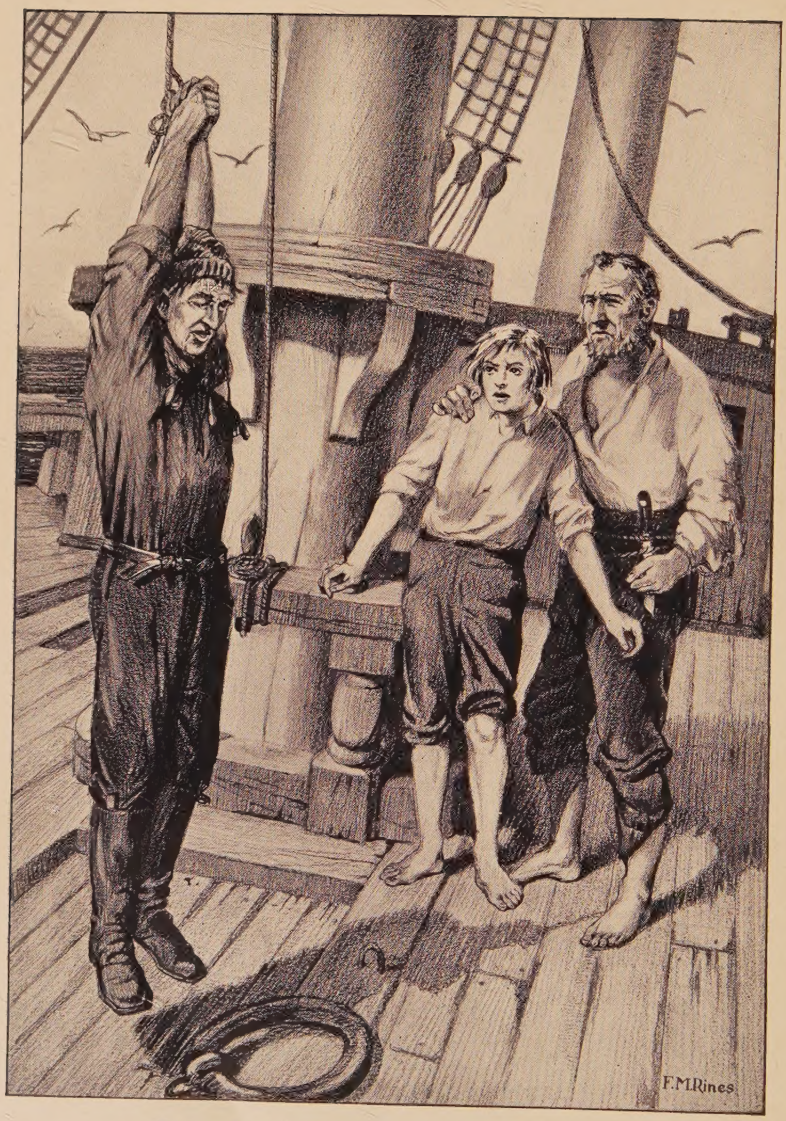

There hung poor Cocky by his thumbs

OLD BRIG'S CARGO

BY

HENRY A. PULSFORD

WITH A FRONTISPIECE BY
FRANK M. RINES

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OLD BRIG'S CARGO

I

A RESCUE BY THE ROADSIDE

It was, I remember, early in the spring of the year, and while yet the hull of the new ship Wanderer stood on the stocks at my father's yards, that the first of those incidents befell which led one after another to the events I have set myself to relate. On a sparkling breezy day in April — a Saturday it must have been, else I had been at school — my father and I drove to the city in his spring phaëton on the business of a delayed consignment of spruce poles from Maine, which were likely to be needed shortly for the masts and spars of the new ship. We had made the journey, a matter of four or five miles, had transacted our business, and about noontime were on our way home again. About midway on the road a thicket of alder and low scrub-oak borders close upon the track on either side, making a ticklish place to pass when — as was only too often the case then — there were drunken, lawless seamen abroad. We had just reached the top of a slight incline and saw straight before us this wood-bordered stretch gridded by the shadow of the branches. My father flicked the horse with his whip, that we might pass the dangerous piece at a smart pace, when suddenly I cried out and grasped his arm. There on the road, not a

hundred yards before us, was a group of three or four men scuffling and struggling together in a confused mêlée. We saw half a dozen vicious blows struck; then, at a sharp yell of warning, the rascals broke and scattered to the cover of the wood, leaving one of their number on his back in the middle of the road. As we drew near and saw how still he lay, with his arms flung wide and his face white and blood-smeared, I thought with a strange shrinking at the heart that the fellow must be dead.

My father who, though he never struck a blow in his life, was one of the bravest men I have ever known, pulled up the horse without a thought to himself or to me or to the bloodthirsty scoundrels who were doubtless lurking in the next thicket. Springing from the carriage, he made a hasty examination of the fallen man, picked him up bodily, — for he was of no great weight, — and in a trice had the limp body wedged in between us on the seat. So quick and decisive was he in all his actions that the whole business took but a moment or two. The footpads, evidently taken by surprise, presently thought better of their flight, for as we started off again I heard them crashing through the undergrowth of the wood; and as we sped towards the open country I looked back and saw them, three as desperate-looking villains as ever I hope to meet, come pelting down the road after us, shouting oaths and threats in a foreign tongue.

"Portuguese," said my father, briefly, with another flick of the lash upon Molly's flanks, though indeed

the little mare, excited by the whole strange performance, and alarmed by the shouting behind her, needed no urging to show her best gait. One by one the rascals, winded as I supposed by their struggle in the road, dropped out of the race and disappeared in the clumps of bushes that skirted the thoroughfare.

It was only when the sound of their pursuing footsteps and their uncouth cries had died away that I had a thought to give to the poor creature my father had placed between us. My first conscious movement was one of shuddering repulsion as the limp body swayed against me with a lurch of the carriage.

"Is he dead?" I whispered.

"Nay, child, he is but stunned," replied my father cheerfully.

So, somewhat easier in my mind, I put up with the gruesome bumps and bobbings of the bloody, wobbling head against my shoulder, until at last we reached the village green and turned in at our doctor's house.

Doctor Whitman had fortunately just come in from his rounds, and as we drove in he came across the yard from the stable to meet us.

"Aha!" he cried in his brusque, decisive way. "What have you brought me here, Friend Slocum? Coals to Newcastle, eh — coals to Newcastle? — Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

This "coals to Newcastle," the good old doctor's only joke, he invariably applied to every contingency in his professional life, whether it was a new baby or a broken leg. The more or less pertinent

enunciation of the phrase served as an inexhaustible source of merriment to the old man.

"Here is a poor creature, Friend Whitman," said my father, "that William and I picked up in the oak thicket as we drove through. We frightened off the rogues who had waylaid him, else they had surely finished him altogether. What does thee think of him, Doctor? No worse than stunned?"

"Humph!" grunted the doctor. "Has he been bled?"

"Nay, Friend, indeed, I thought — "

"Had you no lancet by you then? I'd have given you credit for more sense, Slocum."

"But surely, Doctor, the man has lost blood enough," urged my father, pointing to the gaping wound in the man's head.

"Pooh! What's that? A mere scratch, sir, a mere scratch. No, Slocum, he'll do very well where he is." He checked my father, who was preparing to lift the fellow from the carriage.

The doctor, who had whipped out his lancet at the first word, touched his fingers to the hairy brown wrist where it lay across my knee.

"Overaction!" he snorted. "Overaction, to be sure!" And before I realized what was going forward he had ripped the greasy woollen sleeve to the shoulder, and with one deft stroke had opened one of the veins that corded the man's elbow. I can recall only the sight of that purple jet spouting almost in my face from the sun-browned limb; for at that instant the house, the trees, and the sunlit sea

beyond took to whirling before my eyes; my skin pricked all over my body; and everything went black like a snuffed-out candle.

How it was I escaped the very same treatment upon this occasion I do not know; for our doctor still obstinately held to the practice of blood-letting, almost as to a panacea. That it was still a new experience to me was doubtless due to the fact that I was as yet a stranger to illness of any sort, and had thus never before been under the doctor's care. When next I opened my eyes upon the world of light and life, my first feeling was a sense of rapturous comfort and the warm fragrance of the earth in my nostrils. There I found myself prone upon the ground where my father had laid me, and I saw him bending over me with a smile on his face. The doctor and the poor sailor-man had both disappeared.

"Is he — is he — dead?" I once more gasped faintly.

"Not a bit of it," replied my father. "He came to his senses just in the same minute thee swooned away beside him."

"I swooned away!" I cried, dismayed at having been guilty of any such womanish weakness.

"Nothing less. Nay, boy," he added, seeing me flush crimson, "there is no shame in it. Many a strong man has done the same on slighter provocation. Friend Whitman should at least have warned thee."

"Where has he taken our sailor?"

"Why, he marched him off to the house upon his

own legs to get a plaister for his broken head. How does thee feel now, my son? Can thee get into the carriage thyself, or shall I lift thee? We must make haste home, else thy mother will be anxious."

Though I vowed I was as strong as a lion, when I got to my feet I found my head light and my knees uncertain, so that I was glad to lean upon my father's arm, and to have him half lift me to my seat in the phaëton. Glad was I too that we started at once for home. For I felt just then in no humor for the doctor's chaffing, nor for his inevitable "coals to Newcastle," which on this occasion at any rate, I should have found disconcertingly appropriate.

Upon reaching home, after we had related our adventure of the morning, — my father, to my great relief, withholding all mention of my foolish seizure, — and my mother had expressed wonder, fear, and pleasure at the heroic exploit, it suddenly occurred to me to ask anxiously, "What is going to become of our sailor-man, Father? Doctor Whitman isn't going to keep him, is he?"

"Nay, William, what would the good doctor want of a wild-roving sailor? He will just bind up his wounds and set him on his way, like the good Samaritan."

"There is one other, it seems to me," said my mother, her gentle face smiling up at my father, "who has shown himself even more of the good Samaritan than Doctor Whitman."

"Tut, tut!" said my father. "What else could a man do?" Then, catching the shadow of disappoint-

ment on my face, he laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Never fear, son," he said, with a comprehending smile for my boyish failing, "thee has not seen the last of thy sailor yet. The doctor has promised to bring him here to-morrow. We will keep him over First Day, that we may hear his story before he takes himself off again."

Bright and early the next morning the doctor's gig set the stranger at our door. He limped, and carried his left arm in a sling, and a line of plaister strips crisscrossed obliquely from the eyebrow on one side up into his hair on the other. He was a slim little man, not half a head above my own height, with a shock of coarse sandy hair sticking out in all directions from under his cap. His face was brown and thin with a large, high-bridged nose set like a hatchet in the midst of it. His skin looked like wrinkled parchment, thin and shiny, and the right lid was closed over an eyeball evidently sightless and shrunken. Whether from this deformity or from mere habit he had a trick, when he looked at you, of dropping his chin and twisting his whole head to one side as though to bring his one eye to bear on you that, until you were used to it, was rather embarrassing. His arms were extraordinarily long for his size, his large, skinny hands, the fingers curled sailor-fashion, hanging almost to his knees. His clothes were of the rough blue cloth the seamen use, well worn, but brushed clean and newly darned, so that he made a very decent appearance.

"Friend," said my father, as we met him at the

porch, "I hope I find thee none the worse for yesterday's mischance?"

"Not a bit, sir," he replied, a curious, twisted grin wrinkling one side of his face, "not a bit! I'm a hard one to kill, as many a fo'cas'le bully has larned afore now."

"And what is thy name, Friend?"

"George Ellwood, sir, at your service. I'm obleeged to you, sir, fur givin' me a hand with them pesky Portugees." And he cocked his good eye full upon us.

My father raised his eyebrows.

"Thee must surely be a Friend, with such a name as that," he said gravely.

The fellow shook his head, and again the curious grin twisted his face.

"Wa'al," he said, "my folks was Quakers. Lived over Pawtucket way. But I took to the sea young, an' kinda got out o' the hang of it. I've sailed with Quakers too, loads on 'em, an' thar warn't never one on 'em that stuck to it once he got cl'ar o' soundin's. As fur me, w'y, I ain't set in meetin' sence I was the size o' that boy thar."

"Well then, Friend George, thee shall sit with us this day for thy name's sake."

George's jaw dropped at this a little dejectedly, I thought, and he worked his long fingers as though considerably embarrassed.

"And then," continued my father, "thee will have dinner with us. Afterward we shall be glad to hear thy story."

The two-hour session at the meetinghouse that morning was, I believe, quite as trying an ordeal for me as it was for the strange sailor. He sat at my father's right hand on the men's side, cocking his eye here and there, high and low, all over the place, and clenching and unclenching his fists uneasily. But the time passed at last; we got through dinner somehow; and about three in the afternoon we betook ourselves, my father, George Ellwood, and I, to the old summerhouse that stands in the orchard overlooking the basin that we called "the Pool." Unfortunately, this proved to be one of the frequent instances in which realization falls far short of anticipation; for the story of the dried-up little sailorman, or what part of it my father could induce him to tell us that evening, was commonplace in the extreme.

A native of Pawtucket, he had followed the sea, boy and man, for thirty years. He seemed by hook or crook to have picked up a good nautical education, for he had filled the berth of first and second mate aboard small vessels, and was, in his own conceit, quite capable of navigating any vessel anywhere on the seven seas. But the accidental loss of an eye some years before had made owners reluctant to put him in positions of responsibility, and he had more than once been forced to berth forward. On his last voyage he had suffered shipwreck somewhere in the South Atlantic, had been picked up after three days in an open boat, by a British bark out of Bristol, whither he had been carried, and whence he had

worked his passage home before the mast in a Boston packet.

Who the men were that had attacked him in the oak thicket, or what their object was in assaulting him, he either could not or would not tell. To me, with my wide experience of the yarns and style of narration dear to the seafaring mind, the strangest things about this brief tale were the obvious reluctance with which it was told, the halting, confused way in which the few bald facts were stated, and the total lack of all corroborative detail and local color. In relating the incident of the attack, this singular mingling of confusion and brevity, of uncertainty and reticence, was so marked that the man seemed sullen and embarrassed. Upon my father these peculiarities, if he noticed them at all, made no impression. Indeed, I judged from his manner that he was surprised that any sailor should give an account of himself so briefly, albeit in so halting a manner, and that he was disposed to think the better of him because he lacked the garrulity of his trade.

"And now, Friend Ellwood," he said, when the yarn was finished, "thee will be hunting a ship and be off to sea again, I suppose?"

Ellwood cocked his eye at my father and fixed him for a moment before he replied to his question.

"That," said he at last, "is the queer part of it."

"Aye? And how is that?" asked my father.

"Why, it lays this way, sir: when I run foul o' them pesky Portugees, I was on my course fur this very port."

My father's eyebrows went up a bit in surprised interrogation.

"Ye see, sir, I'm plaguey tired o' the seafarin' life, an' that's a fact. So when I heared over to the city how ye was short-handed fur riggers an' sailmakers an' sech, I cal'lated I'd jest run over to Suffolk an' git me a berth in Slocum's yards, aimin' to take my trick ashore fur a spell."

At this my father frowned, for he was ever strict in forbidding even the mention of business matters upon First Day.

"That will do, Friend Ellwood," he said sternly. "This is not the day to speak of worldly matters. However, if thee find thyself in the same mind to-morrow, come to my office yonder, and perhaps we may come to an agreement that will advantage each one of us."

Ellwood appeared quite taken aback at this, and for a moment sat cocking his eye at my father in open-mouthed perplexity. But being a fairly quick-witted man, he presently realized how matters stood, and said no more that day either of work or of the business of the yards.

II

THE LURE OF SHIPS

In the year 1850, in which my tale begins, my father was still actively engaged in the building of ships. Even then, however, he and all the seafaring people along our coast were beginning to complain of the decline of maritime industries. His yards and wharves lay along the bank of an inlet or tidal stream not far from the city, and called locally the Matagansett River. Opposite the point where his ways met the water the river widened into the broader Pool. In this there was even at low tide a sufficient depth of water to float any of the seagoing craft of those days, and from it led a channel — safe enough to those expert in its narrow, tortuous course — to the broad, deep waters of the bay.

I cannot picture a boyhood passed under conditions more stimulating to the imagination or more replete with the interests and associations that have a charm and fascination for the boyish mind. In the first place, there were the ships. At that period I could not remember a time when there were not at least three or four ships on the stocks in different stages of construction. I knew each vessel well-nigh from the moment of its conception. And was there ever such joy as to watch with impatient but understanding eyes each step of the wonderful, slow, crea-

tive task that, beginning with the laying down of a string of heavy inert logs, ended when a glorious living creature, spreading a snowy fabric cloudlike to the breeze, and burying her glistening breast in the foaming sea, sped forth upon her first adventure! To form such a fine conception in one's mind; to mould the stubborn wood and iron and hemp into these lines of beauty, grace, and strength; to endue the new creation with power and throbbing, palpitating life — can there be a finer task in the world?

As the reader has doubtless already gathered, my parents were of the Society of Friends — quiet, home-keeping folk who feared and shunned the world, its turmoil and its wickedness. My mother was a tender, dovelike little woman, who seemed made for the soft-hued primness of her Quaker garb; my father, stern, silent, reserved, yet of a wonderful simplicity and unworldliness that made him well-nigh as lovable, to us who knew him, as was my mother. There was about him, too, an occasional kindling flash of the eye, or an uplifted look upon his face, or even a swift and almost furtive movement of sympathy with my boyish aspirations and enthusiasms, that now in retrospect inclines me to the belief that there was more of the artist and poet in him than his sterner self deemed altogether seemly. Surely he must have been both to an unusual degree; for although strictly enjoined by his religious scruples from the stringing of rhymes or the making of graven images, there was surely poetic and artistic expression of a high order in the stately and graceful

ships designed in his office and constructed under his direction.

Then there were the seafaring men. Captains and mates, from whalers and clippers, hailing from every coastwise port from Halifax to Rio. Bronzed, deep-chested giants from Maine and New Hampshire; short and rugged fishermen from the Cape; lean, loose-jointed, hatchet-faced whalers from Nantucket; and now and then, but in ever-increasing numbers as the gold-crazed West sucked away our pure New England blood, foreigners of every sort: French halfbreeds from Canada, black-haired Portuguese from the Azores, African negroes escaped from slavery, and even an occasional Lascar from the East Indies. Day after day they came and went through the offices, yards, and shops of my father's place of business, an ever-changing, polyglot throng, constant only in the strong flavor they carried of adventure, danger, and the rude, boisterous life of the sea. They were red-letter days for me when one of these shaggy, weatherbeaten sea-captains was bidden to our house for a meal or for overnight. How I used to hang upon his words, listening eagerly for the first suggestion of a yarn, and even relishing his strange sea-oaths that made my father wince and shocked my poor mother into long spells of dismayed silence!

It was from the workmen in the yards, however, that I could the most readily gratify my greedy appetite for sea lore. There were few of these, indeed, whether they were shipwrights, caulkers, sailmakers,

or riggers, who had not made at least one venture out of soundings, while the greater part of them had been sailors all their lives, until accident, infirmity, or some other compelling circumstance had forced them to take up a less arduous and less perilous calling.

One of them I recall in particular for the number of his yarns, and for his marvelous powers of narration. A grizzled old seaman he was, who never ceased to bewail the moment of weakness that at the untimely age of sixty-seven had snatched him from the harpooner's stage and condemned him to eke out the remainder of an adventurous life with mallet and caulking-iron.

"It was all along o' matterimony," he used to say, regretfully. "Don't you never let no woman git the upper holt o' you, not if you cal'late to command your own craft an' end your days nateral an' shipshape."

"Can't a sailor get married, Mr. Boggs?" I asked ingenuously.

He held his mallet poised in the air and shifted his quid, fixing me impressively with his pale blue eyes.

"That depends," he said; "some on 'em kin, an' more on 'em ain't up to it. As fur me — " he shook his head and spat forcefully in a way that paraphrased Saint Paul more sympathetically than any mere words could have done.

"Doesn't Mrs. Boggs l— " I was going to say "let," but by a happy inspiration changed to "like you to go to sea?"

Again the mallet was poised an instant above the caulking-iron.

"Not her!" he said. "An' what's more, she don't cal'late I shall."

"Oh!" I cried, somewhat dismayed to find that strenuous disapproval of the seafaring life was not confined to mothers.

"Ye see," said Boggs apologetically, "I happen to be Mis' Boggs's third venture, so to speak. Number One an' Number Two both follered the sea, tell it tarned on 'em an' swallered 'em. Number Three, which is me, she 'lows she'll keep moored close alongside. It's tur'ble hard on me, that's be'n a seafarin' man nigh on to fifty year, an' don't feel noways shipshape nor comfortable till I'm out o' soundin's. But Mis' Boggs she's a rare hand to hold on her course all stan'in', an' the harder it blows the closer she'll lay to it. I ain't noways easy on the tiller myself, sonny; but ye know it's consid'able disadvantigeous fur a man oncet he gits to argyin' with the womenfolks."

So the old fellow, like many another in the yards, must content himself with the seafaring flavor of his surroundings, with the caulking of ships he would fain have sailed in, and with his yarns of the sea and the ships and the comrades that knew him no more.

The yards, however, held another fascination for me besides the chance of hearing a tale from one of these old salts. There was not a stroke of axe or saw, turn of auger or blow of hammer that I was not ready to watch with interest. I was familiar

with every step in the work, knew all the technical terms of the trade, and by dint of much questioning and study had arrived at an intelligent comprehension of the why and wherefore of everything I saw the workmen doing. The seafaring life attracted me — as I now realize — largely through my imperfect knowledge of it. It attracts me still, because my knowledge of it is still imperfect. For it is thus with the sea: its glamour of romance and mystery calls out to the boy in us all our lives through, always promising glorious things, yet always fulfilling only in part, until we lay us down to rest upon that heaving gray bosom.

But with the wonderful art of shipbuilding it was different. The satisfactions it offered were real and tangible. From earliest boyhood it had attracted my interest and aroused my enthusiasm. And now, at the age of fourteen, my dearest ambition was to follow in my father's footsteps and to devote my life to the same absorbing and soul-satisfying labors that filled his busy days. Even to this day I cannot take into my nostrils the fragrancy of sawn pine or cedar or the pungent odor of steaming oak, without feeling a keen regret and a sense of loss, in that Providence has guided my feet into other paths.

Yet it was not without a struggle, nor until I had reached my present age, that I could bring myself contentedly to renounce the hope of going to sea, which had been the dearest dream of my earlier boyhood. At the time of the sailing of each of the several ships which my father owned, I used to plead

most passionately for permission to make a voyage. To my mother my persistent importunity on this point was a source of pain and terror, for the dear, timid soul had that horror of the sea to which few women of our community were altogether strangers. But my father, wiser and more farsighted, invariably met my eagerness with placid cheerfulness.

"Wait, my son," he would say, with a smile for my impetuosity, "till thy uncle returns. Then, if thee is still in the same mind, we will talk it over again."

For a time this half-promise satisfied me. My uncle William, my mother's only brother, was my idol, and the delightful prospect of a voyage with him was well worth the waiting for. Then, as time passed and my uncle's return was delayed, I became impatient again. But at last the fear that was growing upon our household — that my uncle's ship had been lost at sea — became patent even to my slow wits. First it was the spasm of pain that I saw upon my mother's face when I carelessly spoke his name; next I began to observe the anxiety with which my father scanned the maritime reports in the newspaper, and the concern and particularity with which he questioned each returned skipper who came to his office, for news of the missing vessel. Finally one dark day he took me aside and said gently: —

"William, thy uncle is in God's hands still, but we fear we may never see him more in this world. Thy mother is grieving for him sorely. We must consider her, thee and I, and until God has strength-

ened her heart to endure it, let us not speak his name more, nor yet the name of his ship."

After that I thought little of going to sea. Not that I was afraid or in any way daunted by my uncle's fate, but even the thought of making a voyage with anyone else brought such a lump in my throat that I was only too willing to put the idea out of my head. My thoughts turned, from then on, without reluctance or reservation, to the prospect of a career no more adventurous than was my father's.

Although at that time I began to take a greater and more personal interest in the work of the yards, I remained quite as ready as ever to listen to such tales of the sea as Mr. Boggs or any other of our company of stranded sailor-men were pleased to produce. My taste still ran to stories of hair-breadth escapes and particularly of miraculous deliverance from apparently inevitable disaster. Into these thrilling narratives I usually contrived in my own mind to introduce my beloved uncle as the hero of whatever adventure the yarn related. Unfortunately, however, my historians, inspired only too often by that passion for fatalistic and tragic realism to which all who follow the sea are more or less liable, sometimes failed to extricate the hero from the dangers that encompassed him. On such occasions I would in fancy change the tragic ending for one more in accord with my happier hope. For I would never permit myself to picture my uncle save as gallantly meeting and surmounting all perils and disasters, and coming safe home to us in the end.

III

A LAUNCHING AND A HOME-COMING

THAT George Ellwood found himself in the same mind on the day following his conversation with my father, and that they had come to a satisfactory agreement, was quite apparent when I visited the yards after school. There I found him already installed in the cordage-loft, busily engaged in measuring and assorting the various kinds of rope that were shortly to be used in rigging our new ship. Evidently he took kindly to his duties, for he showed a quickness and dexterity that spoke of a long acquaintance with the work, and at once won the grudging approval of Evans, the crusty foreman.

He greeted me by cocking his eye at me in a very friendly manner, and wrinkling his brown face into its curious twisted grin.

"Come aboard, Master Slocum!" he cried cheerfully, his long fingers pausing not an instant in their nimble play. "Here we be, sir, snug an' shipshape as a weevil in a cask o' bread."

I answered him with a smile, watching his deft hands in wonder and admiration, for, though no stranger to the skill of seamen in such tasks, I from that time forward considered the control he exercised over a length of rope little short of miraculous. At the touch of his fingers the stiff inert coils seemed

suddenly endowed with life, wriggling and squirming like strange serpents charmed to do his will.

"Aren't you sorry," I asked, after watching him a bit, "to give up going to sea?"

He fixed me earnestly with his beady little eye.

"Oh, you boys, you boys! Ye're all alike, every mother's son o' ye. All crazy fur to go to sea — afore ye know what it is."

"Were you that way when you were a boy?"

"To be sure I were, worse luck! Else I mought 'a' be'n master shipbuilder by this time, same's yer father, an' owner o' many a tall vessel into the bargain."

"But why don't you like it?" I insisted.

"Why?" he repeated, "why? 'Cos it's a dog's life, that's why! Jumpin' here an' thar, alow an' aloft, for'ard an' aft, at the toot o' the bo's'n's whistle or the cuss o' the foul-mouthed mate; riskin' yer neck fair weather or foul at the end of a yard; scorched wi' the sun, lashed wi' the wind, drenched wi' the rain, an' soused wi' scaldin' brine — that's what it is, day an' night, week arter week an' month arter month fur a whole lifetime! So starved that ye don't mind the worms ye crunch in the mouldy bread, an' in yer watch below so dog-tired ye don't feel the varmin that swarms in yer blankets. Ye think it's glorious, the seafarin' life? Boy, I tell ye it's hell!"

But having thus relieved his mind and done his duty in warning me of the horrors of the sea, Cocky Ellwood, as the men soon came to call him, straightway changed his tune. No matter where he was or

what he was doing, he talked constantly of the sea, painting the life for the most part in glowing colors, so that, young as I was, I realized that in spite of all its horror he was actually yearning to get back to it again. He and I, whenever we were together, were always aboard an imaginary ship; and no boy of my acquaintance before or since ever entered into the sport of "playing ship" with half the zest and lively imagination that this middle-aged, dried-up little seaman displayed. And notwithstanding my first disappointment in him, he turned out also to be a capital hand at a yarn; so, as you will not be surprised to learn, before he had been a fortnight in our yards we had become inseparable companions.

About that time we found an old whaleboat abandoned and half-buried in the mud of the marshes beyond the pool. Its seams gaped, the planks were stove in half a dozen places, and several of the forms were broken. But Cocky pronounced her sound at heart; and having borrowed a sledge and a yoke of oxen from our teamster, we dragged her to the yards, and set her up tenderly upon a pair of horses in a corner of one of the sheds. From that time on we labored happily together over this old boat, getting up with the sun to do an hour's work before breakfast, and sawing and planing, caulking and painting on her through the long, pleasant spring evenings, until, to the surprise of everybody in the place, we actually made a seaworthy boat of her.

"Never ye fear," Cocky had said to me, when the other men jeered at him for wasting so much of his

time away from the tavern, "we'll have her launched an' stan'in' down the bay under full sail afore ever they git ready to knock the blocks from under the Wanderer's starn."

And so we had. When she stood finished, glistening in fresh paint and tar, my father pronounced her staunch and safe. Then we knocked the blocks away, and to the cheers of the assembled household and workmen she glided down the ways we had built for her, and took the water bravely. Our next task was to fit her, where she lay moored a few fathoms off the shore, with spar, sail, and rigging, using the same spritsail rig that these boats usually carry at sea.

All this work not only was good training for me in patience, accuracy and perseverance, teaching me to use effectively my hands as well as a variety of tools; but gave at each step some concrete example in figuring that was worth more than many hours spent over my arithmetic in school. You may be sure, however, that such mature considerations never entered my mind — the work itself wooed me; and even our final triumph when, proudly spreading her snow-white sail for the first time to the breeze, she sped forth down the channel for her maiden adventure upon the bay, somehow fell a little short of my anticipation. And I can still recall the vague sense of regret that came in those days with my waking thought that the El Dorado, as we called her, was at last quite finished.

Altogether that May was a month of excitements. No sooner had we made this little pleasure-craft of

ours ready for cruising, than the day set for the launching of my father's new ship was at hand. This, the largest and farthest advanced of any of the three vessels that then stood on the stocks, was a handsome clipper-model of about 2000 tons burden. Designed quite as much for speed as for cargo-carrying capacity, she was destined by my father for trading to Brazil, a commerce which was beginning to offer better profits than the declining whale-trade. We were all proud of her; indeed there was not a sailor-man that squinted along her run as she stood on the stocks, but swore with the strongest-flavored of sea oaths, "she'll be a beauty and a wonder with her heels."

Of course, being Friends and very strict ones too, we would have none of the profane and heathenish ceremonies at our launchings that are now so commonly practised everywhere. Still my father made it an occasion of solemnity, mingled with dignified rejoicing. Our workpeople were given a holiday and attended with their wives and children, all dressed in their best. Any of the sea captains in my father's employ who happened to be in port at the time were invited, as well as a number of his friends, neighbors, and business associates. After the launching the whole company sat down to a generous repast served upon this occasion, at long tables set out in the orchard above the yards.

The day set for the launching fell in the last week of the month. The weather was warm and sunny, the balmy air laden with the perfume of fresh-turned

earth and apple blossoms; in the distance the bay lay drowsing under a lavender haze, languorously dreaming of the coming summer. Long before twelve o'clock the workpeople began to assemble, lounging about the ways, stiff and uncomfortable in their good clothes, and expounding in hoarse whispers to their wives and children the mysteries of the launching. Then, as the sun neared the zenith, they gathered in two compact groups on either side of the great hull. At length my father, with Captain Eben Holden, who would have command of the new vessel, and a handful of friends, climbed to the deck and took their stand in a half-circle at the bow. Ryan, the foreman of the yard, having posted the men, who with their mauls in their hands stood ready to knock aside the blocks, took up his station beside a ship's bell which had been set up under the bows.

While it still lacked a few minutes of the stroke of noon and we were all awaiting Ryan's first blow upon the bell, in a silence so intense that the dropping of a pin might easily have been heard, an old man stepped from his place in the crowd and stood at Ryan's side. He was tall and venerable, clad in a long brown coat of Quaker cut; from under the broad brim of his low-crowned hat an abundance of silver-white hair fell to his shoulders. There he stood, his head thrown back, his arms outstretched, his austere face with closed eyes upturned in the sunshine. It was Friend David Hathaway, and we all knew that the Spirit had moved him to prayer.

To give you the words he used were quite beyond

me. All I know is that we who echoed his prayer in our hearts were deeply moved. In my memory of the scene nothing remains save the pungent fragrance of the air, the low murmur of the old man's voice, punctuated now and then by an ill-repressed sob from a woman close by, the sight of a horny brown hand furtively rubbing away a tear, and the clutching tightness at my own throat; for the memory of my beloved uncle filled my heart to bursting.

Then came another moment of tense silence, until Captain Holden, who stood with his eye to his sextant, lifted his hand.

"Now!" cried my father, and in the same instant out rang the first stroke of the bell. Peal upon peal followed to the accompaniment of the thudding blows of the mauls upon the dogshores. Before the last of the eight strokes were finished, the great hull seemed to quiver, and then began almost imperceptibly to move along the well-greased ways towards the water. With bated breath and in silence we all watched her as she gradually gathered momentum, until with a last impetuous rush that cleft and churned to foam the quiet waters, she shot far out upon the troubled surface of the Pool. Then the multitude broke into a mighty shout, and surging forward over the scattered blocks and timbers to the water's edge, sent up cheer after cheer for the ship their hands had wrought.

The moment I had seen the launching successfully accomplished, I scampered off to the landing. Cocky was there before me, making ready to push off the

dory in which he was to row ashore my father and his friends. To my surprise he was crusty and low-spirited.

"Wasn't it fine?" I asked with enthusiasm, as we pushed off.

Cocky grunted, fixed me mournfully with his good eye, and shook his head.

"Don't you think she took the water splendidly?" I asked, somewhat crestfallen at his surliness.

"Oh, she's all right," said he. "Thar ain't no fault in the ship — not if she's used right."

"But what was wrong, then?"

"I never yet heerd o' the ship that had any luck onless her nose was well soused in good strong liquor soon as her hindquarters touched salt water. It stan's to reason a ship's got to be christened same's a human babby — more so, seein's how she's boun' to spend her hull life twixt the devil an' the deep sea, so to say. Boy, this here's the onluckiest job I've run foul of in many a day!"

I explained as well as I could my father's objections to the ceremony.

"It's blasphemy, you know," I concluded solemnly.

"That's as may be," said Cocky doggedly. "I ain't a-sayin' it won't work good 'nough so long's ye're ashore; but oncet ye're afloat, thar ain't no varchoo in Quakerin'. I seen it tried many a time, an' thar's no use talkin', it can't stan' up to it. No, sir, ye can't name a ship that's had real luck but ye'll find has be'n soused good with liquor at her launchin'. It don't need to be no fancy French stuff, mind; I

cal'late thar ain't nothin' better'n good ol' Jamaiky, when ye git right down to it."

"Do you mean to say that all my father's ships are unlucky?" said I, my loyalty catching fire at the slur his words implied. "They've none of them been christened."

"Onlucky they be then, every one on 'em, an' boun' to come to a bad end sooner or later — ye see ef they don't."

"And the Jennie Barrows," said I, thoughtlessly blurting out the name of my uncle's ship, "do you mean to say she's not lucky?"

"The Jennie Barrows?" repeated Cocky innocently. "Let me see — whar mought the Jennie Barrows be right now?"

I choked and stuttered, but could not answer him.

"Thar ye see!" he cried triumphantly. "What did I tell ye?" And I turned away, cordially hating the little man in my heart.

The banquet went off smoothly and gaily enough except for Captain Holden, who to my father's vexation and embarrassment insisted upon drinking a toast to the new vessel, and responded to it himself in a long rambling speech, full of hearty, boisterous good-will, but not quite untainted with coarseness and profanity.

At last toward sunset we all rose from the tables, and the crowd began to thin out, straggling off in family groups as they had come. My father and mother courteously waited until the last of them had taken their leave, and then, in company with Cap-

tain Holden and Friend Hathaway, who were bidden for the night, we all started off through the orchard and garden to the house. The sun dropped behind the woods that lay beyond the Pool, and its waters, now calm and unrippled in the still evening air, reflected the rose and gold and tender green of the afterglow. The Wanderer swung at her mooring, a formless blotch of darkness upon the mirrored splendor of color. We made our way into the house, entering through the deserted kitchen and passing on to the big sitting-room. The evening had fallen cold, so the sight of the great fire blazing on the hearth was cheerful and welcome. A solitary figure, black against the roaring flames, rose from my father's armchair as we entered, and turned toward us. We could not see the face, but the tall slim figure, straight and soldierly, the confident poise of the head — was there another like it in all the world?

My poor little mother, with an inarticulate cry, flung herself upon his breast and lay there sobbing; my father seized his free hand in both his own, obviously unable to command his voice; and I — little ninny that I was! — stood like a stock betwixt the burly captain and Friend David, vainly struggling to swallow the lump that would rise in my throat, and to blink back the scalding tears. For it was indeed my uncle William, come back to us again, safe and sound from the sea.

IV

THE FATE OF THE JENNIE BARROWS

It was quite characteristic of the boy I was that after the first shock of choking joy for my uncle's home-coming had passed, my thoughts flew at once to the wonderful tale he must have to tell us. So you may imagine my chagrin when my father cut short the talk that evening after supper, and packed us all off to bed before my uncle had more than touched upon the bald facts of his shipwreck and deliverance.

"Thee has had a wearying day of it, William," said he, his hand upon my uncle's shoulder, "and 'tis thoughtless of us to keep thee talking here, when thee is longing for a good night's sleep ashore, after all these months of hardship and peril."

To this Uncle William gave a ready assent, not a whit loath, I dare say, to stretch his tired legs between the soft fragrant sheets of his own bed. But his eye, as he bade us all good-night, was quick to note the disappointment writ plain on my face.

"Come, come, lad!" said he, smiling down upon me, "you have enough to dream upon already, and the tale shall not lose, I promise you, for being kept overnight."

It was a fortunate thing for my health of body and peace of mind that the next day was a holiday, for by the time we had gathered together under the big

apple tree in the orchard the next morning, my patience was near to the breaking-point. My night was spent betwixt dreaming of shipwrecks and staring up at the ceiling, waiting for the dawn. Breakfast was but a pretence; and now that all was ready for my uncle to begin, I found the tedious process of filling and lighting his pipe well-nigh maddening.

"What was the latest news you had of us?" asked my uncle at length.

"From John Bannister, of the whaler O. V. Purchase," replied my father. "It was last November, if I remember aright, that he came to port. He told of having spoken a British brig in the South Atlantic, last from Rio, and bound around the Horn for Sydney, that had left thee safe in the harbor at Rio, discharging cargo."

"Aye, the Martha Jenkins, of Hull. I remember her well: a snub-nosed, buxom old dame she was, and sadly in need of painting and overhauling alow and aloft; Cap'n Robert Jenkins, master. Yes, we met in Rio harbor, and I was still there when he cleared; so I suppose he thought he spoke the truth when he reported me as discharging cargo."

"Then thee did not discharge there?"

My uncle paused a moment to blow out an enormous cloud of smoke that almost hid his face.

"It was this way," he said. "Those greasy Rio merchants kept up their usual game of backing and filling and haggling and bluffing, until I was ready to quit in disgust. Just then I heard through Lopez, one of my Portuguese, of a chance to dispose of my

cargo on my own terms at a small port fifty miles down the coast. As I was just in the humor to jump at the chance, we got up anchor and filled away to the south'ard, before those Rio wharf-rats had stopped their shrieking and chattering long enough to know that the bargain was off.

"Terre Verde, we found, was a lonely little place, a line of rude storehouses and offices strung along the beach of a sweet little harbor all set about with craggy cliffs, where the mountain ranges came tumbling down to the sea. The only civilized people there were the officers of a German mining company that was taking copper out of a mine on the shoulder of a ridge ten miles inland. A shipment of tools and supplies that they had expected from Europe was long overdue, and my cargo, straight from Manchester, was a godsend to them. There was not a thing aboard the ship that they didn't want to buy, from our provisions to the sails, spars, and rigging from her masts. If I'd been agreeable they'd have stripped the ship and set us adrift, helpless, and loaded to the gun'les with copper pigs. For you see money was scarce in that mining-camp, and we had to take our pay in new-smelted copper with" — here my uncle, after glancing cautiously about the orchard, lowered his voice — "with a sprinkling of bar silver and gold dust; for the ores carry a small quantity of the precious metals along with the copper.

"Well, the long and short of it was we struck a very pretty bargain for our whole cargo, and stood out from Terre Verde, homeward bound, with that

under our hatches which would have brought at Manchester — or at Boston either, for that matter — three times what the original cargo had cost us.

"We had scarce cleared half the distance to Cape San Roque when a falling glass and the general look of things warned me that bad weather was not far off. So, having no notion of being caught in a sou'east blow with the rocks off the Cape to le'ward of me, I swung her head to the east'ard to get all the sea room I could.

"Just thirty-six hours later, early on a Sunday morning it was, the storm broke loose, and before noon it was blowing great guns, and out of the sou'-east, as I had expected. I held to my course as long as I dared, eating into the eye of the wind with what little sail it was safe to carry, for I needed every fathom of sea room I could gain. The seas were running high with a promise of worse by nightfall, and it was all three men at the wheel could do to hold her to her course. I stripped her, sail by sail, as I had to, till she had but a shred of a trysail to keep her head to the seas. Toward dusk I gave it up; no fabric could long withstand the fury of that wind and sea. I chose my time, and then — one sickening moment in the hollow of the seas, the rush of roaring white water over her quarter, and the brave old girl shook herself free and was off again, scudding like a gull before the gale.

"That was a terrible night. Never in my life have I encountered a more furious storm. The darkness seemed thick with rain and flying scud, and peopled

with roaring, shrieking demons. Ballasted by her heavy cargo, the good ship rode the mountainous seas with a surprising steadiness, though, being slow in the lift, a following sea would now and then break over the poop with a boom like a cannon shot, and tons of water sluicing the decks would tear away everything that was not lashed fast. Toward morning one of our four boats was wrenched from the davits and was crashing wickedly against the vessel's side at every roll to starboard, so I sent a couple of hands to cut away the tangle of cordage that held the wreck close alongside. Just then a heavy sea came aboard us; and when the deck rose clear of the smother of boiling brine, the wrecked boat was gone and one of the men along with it. My next care was to bring inboard the boat that hung opposite in the starboard davits, and lash it fast alongside the longboat and dory on the roof of the galley. We had it hoisted in a sling and were swinging it inboard, when another sea broke upon us. The men lost their hold of the tackle, and the boat, dropping into the churning water, was swept for'ard along the deck, and bringing up against the fo'castle bulkhead, was smashed out of all usefulness. One poor fellow, caught between the two, had the life crushed out of him, and another lay groaning in the scuppers, with a broken leg.

"Apart from these calamities, I felt pretty comfortable over our situation. The old Barrows was riding out the storm in good shape, staunch and tight in spite of her heavy cargo and the wrenching and

straining of the past two days. As near as I could tell from a dead reckoning, our position was still at least two hundred miles from Cape San Roque; and the wind having drawn more and more into the south, I now had little fear of bringing up on the coast of the mainland. The dangers that might threaten us, should the gale hold for another twenty-four hours, were rather from two groups of rocks and islands lying from one to two hundred miles off the Cape: the Rocas, and Fernando de Narhonha. Either of these clumps of craggy islets might, for all we knew, lie directly in our path. And yet until the wind and sea should moderate, or the weather should clear sufficiently to permit an observation, there was nothing to be done but to keep a sharp lookout for'ard and trust in Providence.

"Along about the first dogwatch of the third day, the glass began to rise, and I noticed a distinct falling off of the fierceness of the gale. But the sea still ran high, and there came puffs out of the south that lacked little of the weight and fury of the worst hours of the storm. Night swept suddenly down upon us before I could see a chance of improving our situation. The air was still full of rain and spray, and the shriek of the gale in the rigging and the crash of the following seas seemed to give the lie to my hope of clearing weather. Very reluctantly I came to the conclusion that we were in for another night of it. I felt that the chances of our bringing up against one of the inhospitable islands that lay somewhere to the north of us were very slight; and yet I was wretch-

edly uneasy over that grim prospect, which I could not deny was among the possibilities of that dreadful night. On we rushed through the blackness, our fate in God's hands, and a prayer to Him in our hearts when it was not on our lips.

"I kept a lookout for'ard, lashed to the fore topmast, though what he could have seen or heard in that thick, shrieking, black night, or how he could have told of it, if his eyes or ears had shown him danger ahead, is more than I can tell you. As it turned out, we shall never know whether or not the poor brave fellow had a warning of the ship's peril or tried to apprise us of its imminence. I remember that a huge sea had caught the vessel amidships, had lifted it and borne it swiftly onward upon its crest; and then, just as we stood braced for the sudden lift of the stern and the sickening downward swoop into the abyss, I all at once became aware of the thunder of breaking surf dead ahead, and in the same instant came a grinding, rending crash that, in spite of our lashings, flung the three of us to the deck. As, dazed and bruised, we struggled to our feet, we felt the deck lift again beneath us, only to bring up once more with a crunching shock, and I knew we were hard and fast upon the rocks.

"The deck sloped away for'ard at an angle of fifteen or twenty degrees, with a slight list to port. In spite of the heavy seas that were breaking under her quarters and drenching us with their spray, the vessel did not lift to them, being evidently wedged fast in a cleft of the reef. And now that we were

stationary, the gale swept over our heads with increased force and fury. Disentangling ourselves from our lashings, the bo's'n and I crept for'ard to investigate. The foremast, snapped off within three feet of the deck, lay athwart the port bulwarks close to the fore chains. The top, where Bill Davis had been on the lookout, lay beyond the light of our lantern, but neither of us doubted for a moment that poor Bill had been shot into the sea like a stone out of a boy's sling. While we stood there, rummaging and peering about in the flickering light, the watch below came swarming up from the fo'castle and over the tangle of spars and rigging to join us. Except my mate, Mr. Hammet, the bo's'n, Davis, and two or three more, they were Portuguese out of the Azores. Too frightened even to pray, they huddled about us, as silent and dispirited a group of wretches as ever I hope to see.

" 'Sound the well, Hammet,' I sang out, as I heard the mate stumble up the companion and come clumping for'ard. 'And, Ellis,' I turned to the bo's'n, 'get out the axes and clear away this mess.'

"The men went at the task with stolid, sullen faces. Now and again, when an extra heavy sea came crashing against the stern, they dropped their axes and looked about them uneasily, with many dubious head-shakings and a low muttering of mingled prayers and oaths. Hammet reported only ten inches in the well. As long as things were no worse I deemed it less hazardous to stay where we were than to attempt to get away in our two boats, which would not

hold us all without serious overcrowding. The chances were that on all sides of us lay other reefs and surf-battered rocks, in which neither boat nor man could live. It is true that in her present berth the ship ran the risk of lifting with the tide, and of either pounding until she broke her back across the reef or of sliding off it and foundering in deep water. But according to my notion the safest plan was to stick to the ship as long as she held together. So when the men had cleared away the wreck of the foremast, I called them aft and told them plainly what I thought. They took my words with looks of obvious discontent.

"'Wha's a matta wit' 'em boat, Missa Cap'n?' said a tall, black-browed Portuguese. 'Dem a gooda boat, plenty mucha strong, plenty mucha beeg.'

"'They wouldn't live a minute, Joey,' said I, 'in the surf and rocks over the side. It'll be light in an hour or so. This vessel is staunch enough to hold together until then. Let's wait until we can get the lay of things; then, if you think you have a better chance in the boats than by sticking here, I'll not be the man to stop ye. Save your skins in your own way, boys, but don't jump out of the frying pan into the fire.'

"That fetched 'em for a time and they slunk off for'ard, gabbling in their own lingo. Presently one of them went below and dug out a little black crucifix; and they all gathered round him on their knees and started what I suppose they called a prayer-meeting; though from the look of 'em, and their way of talking and acting and carrying on, I should have

said there was more cursing than praying in the business. However, it kept them out of mischief, so I was satisfied.

"In the meantime I jumped below to write up the log and to gather together a few necessaries in case we had to leave the ship in a hurry. As close as I could figure, we had struck upon one of the rocks of the Fernando-de-Narhonha group; and that being the case, the tide, as I reckoned from my almanac, was then just about midway of the ebb. This fact, together with the distinct falling off in the force of the wind, which I noted on my return to the deck, gave me new courage and fresh hope."

V

JUNGLE WANDERINGS

"As the day broke gray in the east, we made out first the dim shape of beetling cliffs off the starboard bow. Then, as the light grew, we could see on both sides long lines of half-submerged reefs upon which the huge green seas were crashing with the sound of thunder. The whole after part of the ship, as I could see when I looked over the rail, was lifted bodily out of the water that eddied and boiled and foamed full six fathoms below. Once in a while one of the long surges swept in unbroken, to crash harmlessly against our sternpost, but both the wind and sea were evidently going down rapidly.

"With the coming of daylight the crew took heart of grace and began to look about them. There was still some talk among them of putting off in the boats, but most of them seemed quite content to stay where they were, especially as the sea alongside had such an ugly, dangerous look.

"After breakfast I put the men to work under the carpenter at building a life raft of empty casks and spars -- a task which occupied their minds completely until eight bells. By this time the sky had cleared, except for some masses of high-floating cloud which were scudding off to the no'theast. They moved too rapidly to interfere seriously with my noon observa-

tion. I took my squint at the sun, made it eight bells, and went below to work out our position. Before I had finished my figuring I heard a hubbub on deck, and presently the cook came tumbling down, looking badly scared, with word that Mr. Hammet wanted me. Most of the crew were gathered in a sullen defiant group about the galley, where the two boats lay. One or two of them had their knives out to cut the lashings that secured the longboat, and Hammet with drawn pistol, flanked by the bo's'n and carpenter with marlinspikes, was trying to stand them off.

"The men, it seemed, had become alarmed as the rising tide deepened the water under us, and in a panic at the prospect of the damaged vessel shifting and sliding into deep water, they had made a rush for the boats. Awed for the moment as much by my presence as by Hammet's pistol, they listened quietly to his explanation of the state of affairs, and watched me in silence while I studied the condition of the sea and sky.

" 'Mr. Hammet,' I said quietly, 'I think you may put up your pistol, sir. We'll have no bloodshed over this matter. Men,' — I turned to the crew, — 'I agree with you that there's a fair chance of getting off in the boats at high water, and of making either one of those barren rocks yonder or even Cape San Roque, about two hundred miles to the sou'west. I want to tell you, though, that the sea is too rough for a voyage in open boats, and there is less risk in staying here for another twenty-four hours than in venturing among yonder whitecaps or into the heavy

surf that beats upon these reefs. But your lives are your own to risk as you choose; those of you who want to take to the boats, step for'ard; those who prefer to stick to the vessel with me, get aft. We'll divide boats and raft fairly, according to numbers.'

"At this the Portuguese set to cackling and gesticulating among themselves. A few of them seemed disposed to range themselves alongside of Hammet, Ellis, and me, aft of the mainmast; but their mates overpersuaded 'em, seemingly, for when their palaver stopped they all went for'ard in a bunch. There being a matter of fifteen of them, I offered them the longboat and the raft. But they seemed somehow distrustful of their own handiwork and, contrary to my earnest advice, insisted upon crowding themselves into the longboat, which to be sure was roomy and seaworthy, though somewhat small for their number.

"They worked very cheerfully at getting the boat over the lee side where the water was deep enough and reasonably quiet, and then hustled to get provisions and water stowed aboard her before the turn of the tide. I saw to it that they had everything that was necessary for a safe voyage, giving them a small compass, and laying down for them the true course for the nearest point on the Brazilian coast, which it seemed they were determined to reach. Big Joey, their spokesman, I put in charge as captain of the little craft. They got off without mishap and rowed away, cautiously picking their course between the foam-capped breakers that marked the reefs. When at last they disappeared from sight among the

tumbling seas to westward, I turned away with a heavy heart, and the misgivings I had then for their safety have apparently been justified. For as I afterwards learned, the empty longboat, floating bottom-up, was picked up off Cape San Roque by a passing vessel.

"By the next day the wind had fallen to a light breeze, the sea had gone down, and the weather was perfect. Accordingly I had the dory put over the side, and with the bo's'n and carpenter rowed about to explore our immediate surroundings. Though the old Barrows was lodged hard and fast upon the reef, it was of course only a matter of time and tide and weather with her. Another storm like the one she had just weathered would batter her to pieces in a few hours. To the east of us and not a cable's length away lay a craggy islet. Scarcely hoping to find a practicable landing-place, we drew in close and rowed around its inhospitable shores. On the southern face of it we found to our surprise a — well, you couldn't call it a harbor, it was just a break in the cliff choked with boulders, between which a short stretch of pebbly beach offered a passable landing-place.

"Having beached the dory, we clambered up among the boulders. The cliffs rising sheer on both sides shut us off most effectually from the interior of the island, but after an hour's search we stumbled upon a cave, dry and spacious as a ship's cabin. Here, thought I, was a place where we might salvage the more valuable part of the stores and cargo of the doomed vessel. So we spent the rest of the day

in finishing and strengthening the raft which the crew had begun; for in it we might in good weather bring ashore cargo too bulky or too heavy to be carried safely in the dory.

"For days we worked, moving provisions, water, cases of bullion and ingots of copper, and storing them in the cave. Then at last one night we woke to the howling of the wind and the roar of the rising sea. By that time we had taken to living ashore; so our only anxiety was for the safety of the dory. Through the black darkness of that stormy night, straining, sweating, stumbling, we painfully carried the precious little craft to a safe berth high among the boulders; and then back to our blankets again. When daylight came our raft was a broken mass of driftwood, and the poor old Barrows had disappeared. Beyond question we had so lightened her by removing part of her cargo that, lifting to the heavy seas, she had broken her back across the ledge, and parting amidships, had foundered in deep water.

"It was now a question what steps we should take to get away from our island refuge. Though we had water and provisions for several months, there seemed no good reason for staying longer than we had to. To be sure, these rocks lay close to the path of vessels trading between Europe and Brazil; but the invariable practice of sea captains being to sight such dangerous landmarks only to give them a wide berth, there was small chance of any passing vessel seeing our signals and standing in to take us off. So I resolved to wait only until glass and sky promised set-

tled weather before fitting out the dory and putting to sea.

"Within the next fortnight the weather conditions had so improved that the glass stood at set fair. Accordingly I hastened all the necessary preparations and, pushing off, pointed the nose of the dory seaward. My plan was to sail due south until we reached the track usually followed by traders to and from Brazil; then, shifting my course to south-by-west, to hold that until we either fell in with a vessel or sighted the coast of the mainland. We made good weather of it, but owing to head winds and calms, the distance covered didn't amount to much. However, about the tenth day, on a long reach to the westward we sighted a low headland that must have been somewhere in the neighborhood of Cape San Roque. Pretty near the same time, noting an increase in the bilge-water slopping about in the bottom of the dory, I thought the boat had sprung a leak. Upon investigation, however, it turned out that one of our water casks had somehow lost its bung, and lay upon its side all but empty. This circumstance, added to the fact that the other cask, from which we had been drawing up to that time, had scarce a day's supply left in it, induced me to hold to that course until we made the shore. There on the shingly beach of a small cove we landed, and having drawn the bow of the boat well up the beach, set out to look for a spring of fresh water.

"Jack ashore, you know, is very like fish out of water; and yet you will scarcely credit me when I tell you that within ten minutes the bo's'n and I had

lost our bearings in the dense forest, and couldn't for our lives guess in what quarter the sea lay. After an hour of aimless wandering we came upon a considerable stream, which we had the wit to follow over rough ground and through a thick tropical undergrowth till we came at last upon the shore again. Then having filled the boat's breaker, we set out along the beach to find Mr. Hammet and the carpenter. Though the windings and indentations of the coast line were even greater than those of the brook, we dared not again leave the shore for the trackless forest. So footsore, weary, bruised and torn by stones and brambles, we stumbled on until just about as dusk was falling and we were about to throw ourselves down on the sand to rest, we heard a hallooing in the woods away to the starboard of us. With answering shouts we made off in that direction, and presently met Mr. Hammet, who, alarmed at our protracted absence, had gone in search of us. By that time the darkness had fallen, and there was nothing for it but to spend the night where we were.

"In the morning we set off, fasting, to find the cove where the dory had been left in the carpenter's care. The cove we found, but the carpenter and the boat had both disappeared. Before noon we came upon the little craft, battered out of all usefulness on a rocky headland not half a mile from the cove. The carpenter we never saw again. Whether he put to sea and met with some mishap, or took to the forest and, having lost his way, perished miserably of hunger, we shall never know.

"We contrived with no little difficulty to reach the wreck of the dory, in which to our satisfaction we found some of the provisions still unharmed by the salt water. Then, our long fast broken, we fell to discussing our situation. One thing was obvious: now that our boat had been destroyed, we could continue our journey in no other way than afoot. I had a chart of the locality, but as it showed nothing to the landward side of the coast line, it was of no use to us in deciding upon our route. My opinion was that there lay some two hundred miles of lowlands, with a full share of jungle and swamps, between us and the settlements about Pernambuco. To the north the outlook was still less encouraging. Accordingly, having made up all our provisions and necessary belongings into packs lashed to our backs, we set out bravely upon our long journey southward.

"If I were to try to tell you all the hardships, privations, and dangers we encountered in the next few weeks, my yarn would never be done. Our way lay for the most part through low-lying tangled jungles, often marshy, and broken by pools and treacherous quicksands that we had to make wide détours to avoid. The tortures we suffered from stinging and biting insects that hung about us in swarms are indescribable. Had we not been wearied to the point of unconsciousness, sleep at night would have been out of the question. Added to this, one after another we were stricken down with fever, and after the first eight days could scarcely crawl along our way. On the fourteenth day poor Hammet could not rise from

the ground, and lay alternately moaning and raving in his fever through the heat of the long day. About midnight he died. The rest of us, just able to drag ourselves along, buried him under a heap of stones. Of what followed I have but the haziest recollection. Whether that is made up of actual experience, distorted and exaggerated by fever and weakness, or is nothing more than a dream of my delirium, I shall never know. At the time of Hammet's death we cannot have been far from the little settlement of Natal; and according to the statement of the good padre in whose house I came to myself some three weeks later, we must have been picked up on the outskirts of the village, not more than two or three days after we had buried the poor fellow.

"Our disease, the padre told me, was the dreaded *fiebre amarilla,* the 'Yellow Jack,' as we sailors call it; and it was fortunate for us that natives came upon us — not Portuguese settlers, who have a cowardly fear of the malady and would undoubtedly have left us there to die. The priest was the only white man in that place who had the courage and humanity to give us shelter and care. For Ellis his charity was in vain; the good fellow died only a few days after the Indians had carried us into Natal, leaving me the only survivor of the little band that had stood by the poor old Barrows to the end.

"The old padre, by the way, had a peculiar notion that he could prevent the spread of the fever from infected persons by burning in the room where they lay a powder which he prepared from herbs and

rosins. Beside my bed was placed a brazier of burning charcoal, upon which the old Indian servant from time to time threw a handful of brown powder that burned with a dense aromatic smoke. What effect this had upon the contagion I do not know, though the good old man assured me that he had never known the disease to spread when the sick were kept in rooms well fumigated with it. I was at first almost strangled by the pungent smoke, but after I was used to it I rather enjoyed the process, for it provided absolute immunity from the flies and midges, which are annoying pests in that region.

"When I had recovered my strength, the padre commended me to the care of a Portuguese sea-captain, who was just about to sail for the Azores. I made the voyage as speedily and comfortably as was possible in his lubberly little schooner, and at Fayal had the good fortune to fall in with old Hubbell of the Fair Haven, homeward bound with I don't know how many barrels of oil and bone under his hatches. You can't imagine how sweet that reeking old whaler smelled to me after the unspeakable filth of the schooner's cabin. Though I never could abide a whaler, Hubbell's tub was like a bit of dear old New Bedford, and I could have kissed her greasy planks for very homesickness. As it turned out, stepping aboard her was much the same thing as stepping ashore at one of our own wharves; for twenty-four days later, without further mischance of adventure, we passed through Quick's Hole and dropped anchor in New Bedford harbor."

VI

WHO MIGHT THEY BE?

THERE followed upon my uncle's return a period filled with unparalleled pleasure and delight for me. Being unmarried, and having no nearer kin than my mother, he was accustomed for the short time he spent ashore to make his home at my father's house. He and I lost no time in renewing our old intimacy, and very promptly became inseparable companions. We had many tastes in common and he, with a quick comprehension of all my boyish ideals and ambitions, seemed to enjoy being with me and sharing in all the interests and activities that gave me pleasure. He too liked to lounge about the shipyard, watching the work of the shipwrights and riggers, and always ready to second me in my efforts to get a yarn out of Mr. Boggs or Cocky Ellwood. Our inspection of the new ship, which now lay alongside the sail-loft wharf, was a regular daily occurrence. As soon as we appeared, Cocky left whatever he was about at the time to act as our self-appointed guide, exhibiting with pride the completion of each step in the equipment of the vessel, commenting, criticizing, explaining at every point. He took a great fancy to my uncle.

"There's a fine sailor, to be sure!" he said after their first meeting. "He knows a ship, he does, alow and aloft, blow fair, blow foul."

As for my uncle, he showed Cocky a good-humored tolerance, continually drawing him out, encouraging him to show his knowledge of ships and navigation, and even gravely deferring to his opinion and judgment, in a way that delighted the little man extraordinarily.

It was within these same weeks that there occurred a series of strange incidents which, though we were quite at a loss to explain them at the time, in the light of subsequent events had a very plain significance.

Two women, returning late from meeting, were startled by coming suddenly upon a group of strange-looking foreigners, who stood chattering excitedly on the river bank not far from the shipyard. Evidently quite as alarmed by the encounter as were the women, they fell silent and slouched off at once, while the panic-stricken girls scurried across the fields to our house. My father quieted their fears: they were probably — said he — only some Portuguese sailors belated on a holiday trip to our yards; for there was much talk of the new ship along the coast. But a few days later the crossroads store, three miles down the bay, was broken into and rifled of a considerable quantity of provisions and dry goods. Some powder and ball and two or three old muskets were also missing. The robbery itself was a strange enough occurrence in our peaceful, God-fearing community, but stranger still was the fact that the till and the flimsy old strong-box in which Cyrus Wallbridge kept his profits had not been touched. The pilferers left a plain trail leading down through the garden

to the little cove at its foot, and on the beach there was an indentation in the sand which might well have been made by the keel of a fair-sized boat. While we were all talking about Cyrus's misfortune, Frank Cushman, the constable from Fair Haven, drove down the shore road in his buckboard, asking people to be on the lookout for a whaleboat that had been stolen the week before from the beach in front of Captain Robbins's house.

"No, we don't know who 'twas made off with her," Frank replied to my uncle's question, "but thar's ben a passel o' strange Portugees hangin' around the water front. They ain't nobody knows who they be nor whar they come from. But folks begun to take notice to 'em jest afore the São Miguel cleared for Fayal two weeks ago. Not that strange Portugees is anyways onusual round these parts; the queer thing is they hain't ben seed sence Cap'n Robbins missed his boat, an' none o' the skippers in po't hain't signed on no new Portugee hands, nuther."

Of course everybody was ready to connect these two villainies and to lay them both at the door of the mysterious foreigners. But I believe I was the only one, except perhaps Cocky himself, to think of the murderous assault upon him as possibly another of their misdeeds. For the São Miguel had been in port for more than a month, discharging a cargo of oil and bone, and loading barrel shooks and stores for another venture into the South Atlantic.

What Cocky thought about it all he kept strictly to himself; but I could see that the little man was

uneasy, though, strange to say, it was less for his own skin than for our new ship, which now swung at her moorings just off the wharves. He was constantly hovering about her, either watching her from the shore, or rowing out to her in a skiff as many as half a dozen times a day. Indeed, he acted for all the world like an anxious little woman fussing over a stalwart son who has long outgrown her care. Finally one morning, having led me mysteriously aside, he said: —

"William, I cal'late them villains was aboard her last night."

I simply looked my astonishment.

"Yes, sir!" he went on. "I woke up at one o'clock last night an' see a light on her decks — yes, sir, as plain as I see you now. So I jest tarned out an' put over in the skiff. They doused the glim as soon as I left the shore, but I could smell their tobacca smoke when I jumped fer the deck. I tell ye, William, your father oughta put a crew aboard o' that vessel."

He thereupon went straight to my father with the same tale, and would not be satisfied until he, my uncle, and I rowed out with him on a tour of inspection. He pointed out where the tar on the forechains had been chafed by the painter of their boat, and even picked off a few fibres of hemp that still clung there. He showed, too, how her planks at that point were scored by the shoes of the visitors as they clambered over the side. He picked up two burned matches in the galley, and scraped a pinch of tobacco-

ash from the floor in the after house. He even went so far as to identify the odor of tobacco smoke which was obvious in the galley, the forecastle, and certain parts of the hold, as that peculiar to a variety of the weed grown in the Cape Verde Islands. Altogether he made out such a strong case that my father at once decided to put him aboard the vessel as night watchman.

"Aye, aye, sir," said Cocky, "though I'd ruther ye'd put a crew o' man-sized seamen aboard her. It's my opinion thar's a desprit wicked lot o' villains round these parts."

"Thee shall have a good cutlass and a pair of pistols, if thee will, Friend Ellwood," said my father, "though I charge thee strictly, in case the marauders return, fire the pistols in the air, and defend thyself, if need be, with the flat only. I will have no shedding of blood."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Cocky, though somewhat half-heartedly, I thought.

"As for the crew," continued my father, "Friend Holden is selecting his men now. As soon as their number is complete they shall be sent to relieve thee."

So Cocky took his bed to the deck of the Wanderer and slept there every night, his cutlass by his side and his pistols under his pillow.

Just about this time I began to take note of something afoot in our house that had a flavor of secrecy in it. My father, my uncle, and Captain Holden held long conferences, often late into the night and always in strict privacy. This, occurring in a house

where frank and outspoken intercourse between all its inmates had always been the rule, where nothing was ever said or done that all the world might not have heard, was a most disturbing circumstance. Then my uncle began making trips to all the near-by seaports, occasionally going even as far as Nantucket, sometimes alone, though oftener with Captain Holden, who on their return would frequently pass the night in our house. It was on the occasion of one of these returns that I, chancing to be in the barn collecting eggs when they drove in, heard a scrap of their conversation that set me thinking.

"No, no, no!" my uncle was saying. "You must keep your place, Captain, and I shall be passenger, supercargo — what you will. Only give me a voice in the choice of your crew, it's — "

"You're right, Cap'n Lee," said the old man. "There's the ticklish part of a ticklish business, an' I'm right-down glad to have your service in it."

From this I inferred that there had been a change of plans, that my uncle proposed sailing with Captain Holden, and that for some reason it had become necessary to select the crew with unusual care. My especial interest in the matter concerned my father's promise that I should make my first voyage in my uncle's care. I could not bring myself to go to my father and tell him I had overheard some part of the plan he was resolved to keep private; I was therefore constrained to be silent, hoping only that when it was finally announced that my uncle would sail in the Wanderer there might still be time to persuade

my father and mother to let me accompany him.

The following day I rose at dawn, and rousing Cocky from his bed upon the ship's deck, rowed with him down the inlet to net shrimps for the day's fishing. Through the shore of the river, at that point marshy and overgrown with tall, coarse grass, wound a number of wide ditches, which, though dry at low tide, were at high water deep enough to float a skiff or dory, and famous places for shrimps and minnows. On this occasion, having rowed up one of these channels a quarter of a mile or more, we were scooping up the shrimps in great quantities when a gunshot rang out and a bullet whirred over our heads. A few gulls flew off screaming, but there was nothing else to be seen except a thin wisp of smoke drifting away from a grassy hummock a hundred yards up the stream. While we were still looking and wondering, there came a second report, and the ball chucked in the water not two feet from our skiff.

"Sufferin' Jehoshaphat!" yelled Cocky, reaching for the oars, "I'm a-goin' to git out o' this here crick jest as quick as the Lord'll let me. Them cusses mebbe don't mean us no harm, an' ag'in mebbe they do. Anyhow I allow I've give 'em about all the chanc't I mean to."

I naturally felt very much as he did, and pulled on my oar with a right good will, until a turn in the channel put us out of sight as well as out of range of our unknown assailant. Then, having all the shrimps we needed, we settled down to row homeward in a more leisurely fashion.

Our report of this occurrence caused no little excitement at home. My uncle and Captain Holden were in favor of returning at once with a boatful of our workpeople armed with pistols and muskets. My father stood out flatly for nonresistance. It was Cocky, however, who settled the question.

"No, sir," he said, "they ain't no sort o' use goin' back to the ma'sh now. The tide's be'n a-runnin' out a good two hours, an' them channels 'll be nothin' but mudholes afore ye kin git over thar ag'in. Ye can't go afoot, nuther, 'cause that thar ma'sh is chock full o' bogs an' quicksands."

We all knew this was true, just as well as Cocky, but in the general excitement no one else had thought of it. So as a compromise measure Cocky was sent over to Fair Haven in the buckboard to notify Frank Cushman that the men who had stolen Captain Robbins's whaleboat were probably hiding in the Matagansett marshes. Frank came over before high water that afternoon and searched every channel as far as you could push a skiff. He found, just above the hummock from which the shots had apparently come, an island of firm soil well masked by tall grass and weeds, upon which the marauders had been encamped. There were the ashes of their fire, scraps of paper, and refuse from food that had evidently come from Wallbridge's store, and a long narrow pool lay close by, where the whaleboat might have been concealed. But the lair was empty, the villains having probably fled shortly after Cocky and I had withdrawn from their neighborhood. Where they

had gone, whether they had found themselves another place of concealment among the rocks and boulders farther down the coast, or had sailed away altogether, we had no means of knowing. But the event was to prove — and that before many days had passed — that they were still lurking somewhere within easy reach of our quiet harbor.

Despite all these disturbing occurrences there were many delights in those last few weeks. Among them the excursions and picnics we took in our pleasure-boat, the El Dorado, stand out most prominently in my recollection. Just where we went and what we did were matters of minor consequence: the important point for me was that we were actually navigating the glorious, mysterious ocean. With that for one reality and the company of my adored hero for another I was quite content; for the rest, imagination was equal to the task of supplying whatsoever element the fancy of the moment suggested. The little whaleboat became a frigate, sloop-of-war, smuggler, or buccaneer in the twinkling of an eye, and the blue waters of the bay were at will transformed into the ice-floes of the Arctic, or the sun-bathed reaches of the Spanish Main.

It was upon the occasion of one of these memorable pleasure-trips — we had sailed, I believe, over to Black Rock country and were fishing for blue-fish — that my uncle at last succeeded in extracting some additional account of himself out of the mysterious Cocky. For the little man, though glib enough with his tongue and always ready with a

yarn, had continued to be peculiarly reticent about his own history.

My uncle had from the first shown a deep interest in Cocky, especially since hearing the story of our first meeting with him in the oak thicket, and of the Portuguese sailors who had set upon him there. It was evidently a matter of surprise to him that my father had not questioned the man more strictly as to this affair; but his own efforts to get at the bottom of the mystery met with no better success. However, being a far shrewder man than my father, with greater knowledge of men in general and of sailors in particular, he gathered from Cocky's evasive answers that the little man had something to conceal. So, though Cocky suspected it quite as little as did I, he was paying close heed to the yarns the sailor told, picking up one thread here and another there, fitting one unwary admission to another, until he was ready to astonish me and to confound Cocky by the sudden revelation of his discoveries.

Upon this occasion we were fishing just off the Rock, as I have said, though the weather or tide or something else was unpropitious, nevertheless we were all perfectly happy, rocked by the gentle swell in the soft June sunshine, my uncle puffing at his pipe, Cocky drowsily tending his lines, and I as usual weaving my dreams of tall ships and glorious deeds on the purple seas of myth and story, when all at once my uncle broke the silence.

"Well, Master Ellwood," he said, "let's have a yarn."

Cocky jumped. Whether it was that the request was an unusual one from my uncle, or that there was something in the tone of his voice that presaged what was coming, Cocky was evidently startled.

"W'y, sartin sure, Cap'n, sartin sure!" he said uneasily. "W-what shall she be?"

"Suppose you tell us," said my uncle deliberately, "the story of your life aboard that Portugee slaver."

At this Cocky's jaw dropped, and there he sat, his head on one side, his good eye fixed on my uncle's sternly compelling face, his mouth open, and his whole countenance frozen, as it were, into an expression of ludicrous terror. At last he swallowed hard two or three times and cleared his throat.

"Waal now, Cap'n Lee," he blurted out, "what in tarnation blazes ever put sech a notion as that into your head?"

"Oh, I've been listening to your yarns, my friend; and what with the hints you've let fall here and there, and the knowledge you've displayed now and again, I've put two and two together and drawn my own conclusions. You once served aboard a slaver that traded between the west coast of Africa and the Brazils."

"Aw, shucks, Cap'n! I wouldn't 'a' thought it of ye! To go an' take them fancy yarns I be'n a-spinnin' fur true and gospel. No, sir! I give ye credit fur more gumption — blast me ef I didn't!"

My uncle looked at him a moment, smiling.

"It's no use your trying to bamboozle me, Ellwood. I've been to sea often enough to know a marlinspike

when it hits me twixt the eyes. Pshaw, man, what are you afraid of? It's all between friends and in confidence. Out with it, now!"

Cocky coughed, spat over the side, and then fixed my uncle doubtfully with his watery blue eye.

"You won't make no trouble fur me, nor hold it ag'in me? Honest now, Cap'n Lee?"

"Pooh, man! D'you think I don't know the sea? It's not the first time, I'll be bound to say, that an honest seaman has shipped aboard a scoundrel. Needs must when the devil drives."

Poor Cocky's face brightened at this, and his brown skin wrinkled itself into his twisted grin.

"Ye hit it that time, Cap'n, ye hit it squar', an' that's God's truth. Fur I was druv to it, if ever a man was anywhere on this airth; an' I dropped it ag'in, too, like a hot coal, Cap'n, soon's the Lord let me."

"Well, then, let's have the yarn. It should be a good one by all the evidence."

VII

A CLOSE MOUTH OPENS

"I WAS raised," said Cocky, "as honest as ever a man that trod a ship's deck, bein' born a Quaker an' bred accordin'. The Quakerin', bein' onsuited to a salt-water life, sorta dropped astarn soon's I got out o' soundin's; but they must 'a' be'n honest streaks caulked in me, like rope-yarns betwixt a ship's planks; and the more salt water I soaked up, the tighter they stuck in my seams. In them airly days I was a right smart lad fur a sailor-boy, an' I had no notion o' stickin' fast in the fo'cas'le all my life, so by keepin' my mouth shet, an' my ears an' eyes open, — I had a good pair o' both them days, — an' pickin' up a mite o' book larnin' here an' there, I'd got my master navigator's papers afore I was tarned thirty-three. But they never done me no good, on'y to spile my luck. I got my sta'board light doused in a little argyment aboard a lime-juicer down Very Cruz way. Arter that the owners 'lowed I was a damaged article an' had no use fur me on'y in a bo's'n's berth. That thar was more'n my pride 'd swaller; but 'twan't long afore I larned that everybody sized me up at about the same figger; so though I wouldn't give in to 'em at fust, I soon got sick o' playin' officer aboard o' mudscows an' clammers, an'

was durn glad to sign on as bo's'n of any deep-water craft whar the berth was empty.

"Waal, arter knockin' about on all sorts o' vessels in all parts o' the world, I finally shipped as bo's'n aboard a big East Indyman hailin' from London an' bound for Bombay round the Cape. We made a fairish v'yage of it out. But at Bombay, as luck would have it, the second mate got drunk on shore leave an' took the cholery, which in the course o' natur' give the third mate's berth to me. I held it right enough till homeward bound, we run into foul weather off the west coast of Afriky. Now I guess that thar vessel was worth a durn sight more sunk than she was afloat, fur as soon's the seas got to runnin' high, we see they wan't much betwixt us an' Davy Jones on'y paint an' tarred oakum. Why, them seams opened jest like the windy blinds on a meetin'house. Pump? Waal, now, I jest guess we did. But the Cap'n — he was a sensible cuss fur a Britisher — couldn't see as he had a call to strain the hull bloomin' South Atlantic through a blasted rotten colander, meanin' his own vessel, by Jiminy! So 'twan't long afore he sung out, 'Varst pumpin', an' stand by to lower away the boats!'

"Them owners must 'a' had a mite o' humanity in 'em, fur the boats was sound an' seaworthy, well-found an' plenty on 'em, which is onusual in a case o' that kind. Fur's I know every soul aboard was saved. Though we all tried to hang together arter we got away from the old hulk, the weather turned thick, an' by the next mornin' they wan't another

boat in sight. We laid a course to the nor'ard, which would keep us as nigh as mought be in the track o' vessels tradin' to an' from the Cape, an' yet fetch up on the Guinea coast if we failed to fall in with one on 'em.

"By the second day the fog had clart, an' the sea was flat as a pancake. Fort'nately fur us they wan't a dead ca'm, but jest a pretty little sailin' breeze comin' over our sta'board quarter, an' a-trundlin' the boat along as cute as ye'd want to see. It held stiddy, too, in that quarter, until on the mornin' o' the fifth day thar lay the Guinea coast, a blue haze to the no'theast. By noon we'd raised the hull coast line, an' was runnin' along it, all eyes peeled fur a likely landin'-place. We didn't none of us know the coast, nor we didn't like what we'd heerd tell of it; but by that time we was sick o' that v'yage, and *Land-o!* would 'a' sounded good to us even if we'd knowed it was the coast o' fire an' brimstone. 'Long about eight bells we'd drawed well inshore an' made the mouth of a harbor. As we run in, thar we see the tops an' yards of a brig layin' at anchor. She had a lubberly foreign rig on her that sorta made me oneasy; but a ship's a ship, as we allowed, an' we wan't none on us a-hankerin' fur a long spell o' visitin' with the black brothers on the beach.

"Waal, we hailed her an' a black-headed ol' pirate with a beard like a tar-brush swung up onto the bul'arks an' took a long squint at us. He 'peared 'bout as much pleased to see us as if we'd had the smallpox.

" 'He's a Cape Verder, by the cut of his jib,' says I. 'Is there one of ye kin hail him in his own lingo?'

"That was afore I'd larnt it myself, though I kin jabber it with the worst on 'em now. An ol' gent, one o' the passengers, sung out somethin', an' the pirate come back at him short an' sharp.

" 'He says to keep off or he'll fire on us,' says the ol' feller, all of a tremble.

" 'Tell him we be nothin' on'y a boatload o' shipwrecked sailors,' says I agin.

"He put this into the Portugee the Cape Verders talk. The pirate swung down behind the bul'arks agin, an' pretty soon another pirate swung up in his place. When he'd sized us up, he sung out that he'd take aboard him any able seaman amongst us, but that the rest must go to the beach. They was six of us sailor-men aboard, an' I 'lowed that three on us mought go aboard the brig, whilst t'other three should stick to the boat an' look arter the passengers. We tossed to see which it'd be, heads to go an' tails to stay, with this ol' Dutch shillin' I picked up in Batavia an' always carry fur luck — darn little luck they was in it that time, though, fur fust toss come heads fur me. T'other two was Tim Ryan, an Irishman, an' a tall skinny Lascar we called Bones.

"We'd sca'ce set foot on the brig's deck, when the two blackbearded pirates that had spoke us from the bul'arks, jumped fur us an' knocked us down the fore hatch, an' afore we knowed what was what, thar we lay in a stinkin' black hole with battened hatches over our heads. 'Twan't long after that we heerd

the crew gittin' up the anchor, an' knowed by the loppin' o' the waves along the vessel's side that she was under way. Bimebye they lifted the hatch an' h'isted us out on deck. By that time the ship was well out to sea, an' what's more, we'd got to know pretty well nigh what kind of a craft we was on, an' what kind of a v'yage we'd shipped fur. They ain't no smell this side o' damnation that comes anywhere nigh the smell of a slaver fur real flavor; an' no one that's ever passed to leeward o' one on 'em kin ever git quit o' the memory o' that stench. We never'd 'a' let 'em shanghai us the way they did, on'y we'd come up to wind'ard of 'em an' didn't ketch the smell till they grabbed us.

"Waal, now, the yarns I could spin ye about the things we seen an' done an' lived through aboard o' that vessel would tarn yer stummicks an' no mistake. You know what slavers is, Cap'n, an' I cal'late that one wan't much better nor yet a powerful sight wuss nor the giner'l run on 'em. Most I kin say is they was all devils, them blasted Portugees, an' the vessel was a floatin' hell, with the cargo o' niggers in the hold fur lost souls. An' that wan't the wust of it neither. I ain't a-goin' to tell the awful horrors o' that vile ship — not afore this young lad here —

"That v'yage we was bound fur Brazil, our port layin' a matter o' fifty miles up the Amazon River whar they was big plantations that needed niggers. Afore we got thar I had my mind fixed to slip my cable an' run fur it soon's we dropped anchor. But the fust look around me was enough to kill all

thought o' that. That thar Amazon River — w'y, this here bay is liker a river than that thar Amazon is, even fifty mile from the sea. Long Island Sound yonder is a canal alongside it. The shores is flat an' ma'shy, an' is mostly flooded in the rainy season, so you'd a'most think you was out o' soundin's. As fur land — w'y, they ain't no land, on'y miles an' miles o' steamin' swamps full o' snakes an' crocodiles, or thick, tangled forests with their top-hamper crowded with monkeys an' bats an' wil' cats, an' fever everywhere. No, sir! That slaver was Hell sure's the sea's salt; but a sailor could live thar, long's he was white and knew the ropes. But ashore — w'y, sufferin' Jehoshaphat! any fool could see that they wan't nothin' on'y murder an' sudden death to be got ashore. So I stuck to that vessel. We got shet of our niggers, cleaned ship, an' up anchor an' away to Afriky agin fur another cargo.

"Soon's we made the Guinea coast I see the chance to git cl'ar wan't no better than in the Amazon country. The niggers of the coast tribes that trafficked with the slavers was meaner'n p'ison, an' bein' thick as thieves with our cap'n, was sartin to tarn back all deserters from his ship, onless they took a notion to sell 'em into slavery to the A-rabs in the Barb'ry States. Accordin'ly, not bein' one as could see any purticular vartoo in jumpin' out o' the fryin' pan into the fire, I 'lowed I'd stick to the cap'n an' his ship till su'thin' should tarn up.

"They wan't nothin' tarned up of any account ontil we was on our fourth v'yage from Brazil to the

Guinea coast. We'd jest onloaded a good cargo o' likely niggers at an out-o'-the-way little harbor not fur from Pernambuco, an' was bound — 'in ballast,' as our papers put it — fur one o' them pesky little Cape Verde Islands with a name I couldn't never twist my tongue to. O' course we wan't never sech fools as to carry papers that showed in black an' white jest what deviltry we was up to. So I never reely knowed whether we was bound fur the Cape Verdes, or fur another trip to the slave-coast. But I did know right enough, an' five or six o' the smartest o' the crew besides, that the ballast we sweated to stow in that stinkpot of a hold was neither more nor less than gold and silver coin an' bullion, packed in kegs and boxes, an' like as not, the profits of a year or more o' the slave traffic. So I cal'lated we was sartin sure bound fur the Islands this trip, an' begun to figger an' study how I'd slip my cable an' show 'em my heels as soon as we made harbor. What's more, me an' my two mates allowed we'd pay ourselves good an' plenty out o' that 'ballast' fur the dogs' life they'd led us an' the onchristian work they'd put us to aboard that rotten craft.

"We couldn't 'a' b'en more'n two or three days out when we run into thick weather, as heavy a fog as ever I see in them latitoods. Portugees is lubberly sailors when it comes to navigation, though they kin handle a vessel right enough if their course is laid down fur 'em. As fur the cap'n, he was too lazy to take reg'ler observations, sailin' mostly by dead reckoning or sechlike rule-o'-thumb sort o' navigation,

but genrely makin' port all right by the Devil's own luck. This time the fog shet down on him, as I said, two or three days out o' Pernambuco, an' he hadn't even hove the log sence leavin' port. The wind had fell off too, so's they wan't on'y a light draw aloft to fill our tops'ls an' give us steerage way; an' with that we held to our course regardless. We kep' on all that day, makin' mebbe three knots, mebbe less, an' when night fell we was still joggin' along through the thick darkness, slow an' stiddy as a farmer on his way to market. I was in the fust watch that night, an' tarned in at midnight easy enough in my mind, fur I was never a man to worry myself over another feller's ship. They didn't nothin' happen till 'long about four bells, when the ol' hooker struck suthin'; an' a mighty hard whack too. Fust I knowed I was on the deck under my hammock, a-rubbin' my bruised shoulder an' feelin' sorta sick. The ship still had some way on her. O' course I was out o' the fo'cas'le in a jiffy, but I'd sca'ce had time to take a squint round into the blackness when she brought up again with a long, grittin' scrape along her keel that set her timbers to tremblin' like a scairt woman, an' was like to have brought me to the deck once more. Then she give a slow list to port an' hung thar stiddy as a church. Some o' the watch on deck had the sense to call all hands an' to jump into the riggin' an' take in the little canvas that was drawin'. 'Twas lucky fur us that the wind hadn't weight enough to hurt any. I sounded the well once or twice an' see she wan't takin' in water of any account. So as all

was snug alow an' aloft, goll dast me if I didn't leave 'em to their prayin' an' cussin', an' tarn in to have my snooze out.

"Come daylight I went on deck an' took a look around. Now, Cap'n Lee, it's God's truth I'm tellin' ye, but ye'll never believe it, nor I wouldn't believe it nuther, that a mortal ship could git herself into no sech a berth as I seed that slaver in with my own eyes. 'Twas like as if she lay in a gre't stun dry-dock — so close alongside that ye could a'most reach over the bul'arks to po't an' sta'board an' lay yer hand agin the rock, was a pa'r o' thunderin' big cliffs, that stretched their smooth stun walls so high aloft they made the ol' brig's masts look puny an' spindlin'. For'ard they narrered in, so's they met a scant three fathoms from the tip o' the bowsprit, an' under her bows was a strip o' beach all cluttered up wi' boulders an' broken rocks; but aft they opened out wide, so's ye could see the curved sweep o' breakers that marked the reefs she'd scraped her bottom over. A look over the side showed me they was a scant fathom o' water under her amidships, with a bed o' sand an' gravel that'd hold the ol' hulk thar till she rotted to pieces.

"This much I see the fust minute I was on deck. In the next I larnt they'd be'n ugly doin's whilst I slept. Two o' the crew, their skulls stove in, lay stun-dead in the scuppers. The cap'n sprawled in a pool o' blood abaft the mainmast with a knife in his heart. Under the cuddy table amongst the broken glass an' crockery lay the second mate, a wide gash in his throat. The davits was swung outbo'd, a

tangle o' tackle hanging over the side as if the boats had be'n dropped over an' cut loose. For'ard, where the cliffs lay close an' they wan't but little water under foot, two boats lay stove in an' sunk, but still fast to the falls. The rest o' the boats — they was five on 'em all told — had seemin'ly got safe away.

"Nigh to the main hatch, which was wide open, my eye fell upon a trail o' small gold pieces. This led me below, whar I see the crew had broached a half-dozen kegs an' cases, scatterin' the coins abroad an', I s'pose, stuffin' their pockets with what they could carry. Here the fust mate, who had come upon them in their plunderin' work, lay dead in his blood all covered with stab wounds; not fur away from him was the corpse of one o' the rascals he'd done fur with a marlinspike. As I pictered it, the crew arter their fust panic come to see their precious souls wan't bound quick fur hell, and plucked up spirit enough to tarn on their officers, help theirselves to the gold and take to the boats. How I come to sleep through it all plumb stumps me, though I never was one to lay awake in my watch below.

"Waal, I rummaged out some grub in the galley, to git my stummick in shape fur the job I'd got to do. Then I hove them carcases over the starn, whar the tide an' the sharks could git at 'em, swabbed down the deck, an' fixed things shipshape. The two stove boats I h'isted on deck, an' found 'em in pretty bad shape; but bein' handy with tools, I cal'lated that by usin' the stuff from the one to patch up t'other, I mought make out a good boat betwixt 'em.

'Twan't long, though, afore I larnt that no human critter could work betwixt them two cliffs, exceptin' a couple of hours mornin' an' evenin' afore the sun reached the deck an' arter it had dropped behind the other side. By five or six bells it got so durned hot in that hole that ye couldn't do nothin' on'y lay under a scrap o' canvas an' sweat. So it was on'y arter weeks o' hard work with the lubberly tools I found aboard that I finished my job, an' swung the boat outbo'd on the stern davits. I'd fitted her with spar an' sail, filled her breaker with water, an' stowed bread an' beef in kegs under the thwart amidships. The next day, wind an' weather provin' fair, I dropped into the little craft an' shoved off. They was a break in them reefs that I'd had my eye on fur quite a spell: 'twan't no place to take a reel ship through, but that thar longboat skimmed through it like a gull. Once outside I tarned her nose to the west'ard, knowin' from the observations I'd took afore startin' that the path o' tradin' vessels lay somewheres thereabouts. I hated powerful bad to leave all that gold behind, but I 'lowed they mought be oncomfortable questions asked, an' mebbe some ondue curiousness excited, if so be I was picked up with a boatload o' pistoles an' doubloons. So I didn't take on'y my jest an' fair wages, stitched in a canvas belt I wore round my waist.

"Four days out I was sighted by a British bark last from Rio an' bound fur Bristol. She picked me up, an' her cap'n 'lowed I mought work my way home in her. We made po't in due course o' time,

— fifty-three days it took, — an' goll dast me if he didn't put me ashore without a penny to bless myself with. I got a berth aboard a coaster bound fur Liverpool whar I landed with a couple o' shillin's in my pockets. That kep' me till the next Boston packet sailed. As luck would have it, I knowed the third mate aboard her, an' got a good easy berth an' good pay besides my passage home.

"I still got the gold I took from the slaver, but nary a bit o' good will it ever be to me, fur I wouldn't never dast to git it changed."

VIII

WE START IN THE DARK

EVER since Cocky Ellwood had been put aboard the Wanderer as night watchman I had set my heart on spending a night there in his company. As yet I had not screwed up my courage to the point of asking my father's permission to do so; indeed, the disturbing events of the past week made me quite sure he would refuse to humor me, so, while waiting for his memory of the marauding band of Portuguese to grow less acute, I amused myself by preparing one of the bunks in the ship's cabin for my projected occupancy. The night following the memorable fishing-trip over in Black Rock country I took it into my head to spend the long summer evening on the deck with him, mainly for the purpose of coaxing out of him some elaborations upon the tale he had told the day before. Accordingly after supper I crept down through the deserted shipyard to the water front, and launching one of the skiffs that always lay there, was soon alongside. Cocky was leaning over the bulwarks enjoying his pipe. He greeted me with neither surprise nor remonstrance, and gave me a hand over the side.

Strangely enough, in spite of my eagerness to hear them, I have never been able to recall a single one

of the yarns Cocky spun that night. The memory of the slowly fading light, of the twinkling stars over our heads, of the gentle swing and sway of the vessel in the making tide, of the soft, cool kiss of the breeze, and the delicious, drowsy languor that gradually stole over my senses, is even now as clear as if it had all happened only yesterday. It had been a long day, full of pleasant but none the less wearying activities, and under these circumstances sleep usually comes swiftly and overpoweringly to healthy youth. In one moment I was stretched along the deck planks, my head pillowed on my arm, my mind but half conscious of the droning murmur of Cocky's voice telling the tale that failed to reach my drowsing senses; the next, I opened my eyes upon a pitchy darkness, heard the slap and hiss of rushing waters close at hand, and felt the heaving lift, the roll, and the rushing downward plunge of the hull beneath me. Then gradually the knowledge dawned upon my waking mind that I was in the hold of a vessel, and at that, a vessel under sail and well out upon the open sea.

As my mind became clearer and I cast my thoughts backward over the events of the previous day, I realized that I had fallen asleep on the deck of the Wanderer. Whether I was still in her or no, why she had sailed so suddenly and unexpectedly, how the preparations for a voyage had been so quickly completed, and how my presence came to have been overlooked, I was quite at a loss to imagine. The only possible explanation that at the moment oc-

curred to me was that Captain Holden had slipped his moorings and was making a trial run down the bay, with the possible intention of putting in at New Bedford for the more convenient shipping of stores and crew. But as there was obviously too much pitching and rolling for the landlocked waters of the bay, I was obliged to amend this hypothesis by the supposition that he was taking her around the Cape to Boston instead.

Upon turning my attention to the question of my own whereabouts in the vessel, I found myself much less at a loss. Thoroughly familiar as I was with every plank and timber in the ship, — which had been constructed to all intents and purposes under my very eyes, — I promptly discovered, by feeling along the bulkheads and by the cables that creaked through a pair of blocks just above my head, that I was in a storeroom under the floor of the cabin, and accessible through a narrow hatchway placed amidships just aft of the table. The cables overhead were those connecting the wheel on the poop with the rudderhead, and they were constantly shifting back and forth through the complaining blocks in response to the helmsman's efforts to hold the ship to her course.

Scarcely had I satisfied myself as to my situation when the hatch was removed, and the dark hole where I lay was lit up by a flood of dazzling daylight from far above. Then a queer dark face was thrust between me and the light and grinned down at me maliciously.

"Ai-yah, little mista!" cried its owner. "You lika sleep alla time, hey?"

"No," said I, "I'm awake now, and I'm quite ready for breakfast. Are you the steward?"

"Stoo-arrt? W'at you call it, stoo-arrt? Me, I beena cook. You lika sleep? Bimebye sleepa too-mucha goot. You lika eat? Bimebye you eata fisha plentee. You lika drink? Bimebye you drinka salta water too-mucha alla time!"

He spoke these words with an almost inconceivable rapidity, accompanying them with grins, winks, and grimaces which conveyed the sinister meaning his words were too unintelligible to express. Then with a cackling laugh he withdrew his face from the hatchway, and proceeded to let down a bucket containing a few pieces of ship's bread and a jug of water. As soon as I had taken these out, he drew the bucket up again, slammed down the hatch and made it fast.

In spite of my surprise and alarm at this rather grim performance, I first munched the biscuit and drank the water. Then, my hunger and thirst satisfied, I began to think things over. One thing only seemed fairly certain: neither I nor the ship was in the possession of my friends. I could scarcely bring myself to believe that the Wanderer, a fine big full-rigged ship, had actually been stolen from her moorings right under the windows of my father's house. That surely was an impossibility. And yet it seemed at least highly probable that this impossibility had occurred, and but little less probable that it was the

marauding band of Portuguese who had committed this daring theft. Sick at heart, and not a little panic-stricken at the mischance that had befallen me, I flung myself face down upon the deck and gave way to tears. The very act of weeping, however, brought into my mind one of my father's sayings: —

"Tears," he declared, "are the prayers of children; silence, the prayer of a man."

And stung by this recollection to a realization of my childishness, I rose to my feet, and there erect in the darkness prayed silently to God for help and comfort.

From my devotions came calmness and courage. Bent upon a new exploration of my prison-house, I stepped forward, only to trip over a raised place in the deck, which, as I immediately recalled, was the hatch over an opening recently cut through — at my uncle's instance — into the afterhold. There was, as I well knew, between this and the mainhold a bulkhead pierced by a pair of heavy swing doors. Dropping to my knees, I found the hatch — in this case a heavy oaken grid — secured to the deck by iron hooks; in a moment I had them loosed and the grid lifted, and in the next I had slipped through into the hold. Feeling my way forward, I came to the mizzenmast, and beyond it to the bulkhead, its doors swung back and made fast to keep them from swaying with each roll of the ship. As I passed between them I heard, above the creaking of timbers and the gurgle and slap of the waves on the vessel's sides, a

sound for all the world like a man groaning in agony. I was badly frightened at first; but presently, at the thought that it might be Cocky, wounded and in need of help, I took heart again and crept cautiously forward in the direction of the sound. Within a few paces my feet came in contact with a pair of legs, clad, as my groping fingers told me, in corduroys, sticky and redolent of tar. Something vaguely familiar about them reassured me, and as the groaning continued, I reached for the man's shoulder and touched it.

"Cocky," I whispered, "is it you?"

He stopped groaning at once, and I could feel a strong shudder go through him.

"I-in G-God's name, who are ye?" he stammered, and I could hear the click of his chattering teeth.

"It's only me, William Slocum," said I.

"God Almighty! Don't ye say that!" he groaned. "I ain't never done ye no harm, an' we was always shipmates together; ye wouldn't go fur to do it, would ye?"

"Do what, Cocky?"

"Ye wouldn't come back to ha'nt me."

"I haven't come back — "

"Good Lord!" he wailed. "Then we're both dead — dead an' done fur!"

"Why, we're not dead, Cocky. What put such an idea — but we can't talk so loud; someone might hear us."

"An' them black-hearted rapscallions didn't heave ye overboard?"

"No, Cocky; don't you hear me talking to you?"

"An' ye ain't no ghost, Master William? I cal'late I'd jest about die, if ye was a sperrit."

"Don't be a fool, man! Where's your courage? Sit up there, and tell me what has happened to us and to the ship."

I heard him moving about clumsily, groaning at every motion.

"Did they hurt you?" I asked.

"Nuthin' on'y a crack over the head an' a bruise or two I got when they hove me down through the hatch. How come they to let ye git down here, my boy?"

I told him how I had wakened to find myself in the storeroom under the cabin; how after a while I had realized that some calamity had happened; and how I had stumbled upon the new hatch, had dropped through it into the after hold, and led by his groans, had finally found him where he lay under the main hatch.

"Bill," he said, and his groping fingers found my hand and grasped it tight, "ye're brave — fur a boy, goll d—— no, I didn't go fur to say no sech a thing as that — fishhooks! that was what I meant to say. Father, he always 'lowed they wan't no harm in 'fishhooks,' if so be ye'd got to say suthin' strong! Now ye've got a head on ye, boy — d'ye cal'late they's any harm in 'fishhooks'?"

"Not if you're careful to keep clear of the points," said I.

"Heh, heh, heh, heh!" cackled the little man.

"Not if ye're keerful to keep cl'ar o' the p'ints! Why, ye're reel comical, Bill, reel comical."

"But tell me, Cocky, how did it all happen?"

"Waal, sir, this was the way of it, fur's I kin tell ye. Thar we sot a-yarnin' away on deck, when all of a sudden yer uncle hailed us from a skiff alongside.

" 'Is that young scamp, William, aboard thar?' says he.

" 'Aye, aye, sir!' says I. 'But blast my eyes if the rascal ain't sound asleep.'

" 'All right, Ellwood,' says he, 'you stow him in one o' the bunks below an' I'll tell the lad's mother he's safe as a church.' Them's his very words, 'safe's a church,' says he.

"At that I picked ye up in my arms like a babby and carried ye down to the cabin an' stowed ye snug in the bunk ye'd fixed up fur yourself thar. Then, bein' dog-tired with the long day's fishin', I tarned in myself.

"The fust thing I knowed arter that, I felt a chokin' in my throat, an' opened my eyes to see a black Portugee a-bendin' over me, one hand on my gullet, t'other a-holdin' a div'lish-lookin' knife handy to my ribs. I couldn't 'a' made so much as a squeak, not if ye'd 'a' give me the hull ship fur it.

"Then another black rascal dropped down alongside an' stuffed a gag in my mouth an' took a few tarns o' lanyard about me till I was as snug as a furled top r'yal with a storm brewin'.

"When I kinda got used to the cuttin' o' them cords, I begun to look about me an' see what them vagabones was up to. They was about a dozen on 'em nigh's I could count, an' they was a-sneakin' about the deck an' up an' down the riggin' quiet an' nimble as so many polecats. I see they was sailor-men all right, the way they handled the lifts an' broke out the sails; an' it wan't no lubbers' job neither, the canvas an' runnin' gear bein' new an' stiff. They showed sense too in settin' on'y jest enough sail to make her easy to handle: the top hamper it was mostly, an' a couple o' jibs, though fur a fact, I couldn't see what was goin' on for'ard. Then, jest as I was studyin' how they cal'lated to pilot her out through that thar channel, one on 'em fotched me a kick in the ribs an' tol' me in Portugee lingo to git up on my legs. I knowed what he meant, havin' larned the lingo aboard o' that rotten slaver; but I couldn't stir hand nor foot. I cal'late he knowed it, fur he took an' sot me on my feet, 's if I was a barr'l o' pork, an' as't me did I know the channel.

"I shook my head.

"But he prob'ly 'lowed I was lyin', fur he cut me loose an' hazed me aft to the wheel.

" 'Take her out through the channel,' he says. 'An' look out ye keep her cl'ar o' reefs an' bars. If she strikes, ye'll git this knife in yer guts!'

"An' thar he stood, his long, wicked knife handy to my ribs, whilst I, the gag still nigh to chokin' me, gripped the spokes an' conned the ship. She still

swung at her moorin's by'r bow cable, the breeze blowin' gentle from the east'ard, jest a-flutt'rin' her tops'ls. Then the cuss alongside o' me made a sign to one of his mates, who jumped for'ard an' cut the cable. I felt the shock when the axe bit through the taut strands, an' let her fall off ontil the canvas caught an' filled.

"How I ever done it, I can't tell ye; fur though it's many a time I've made that thar channel in the dory or whaleboat along with ye, I never 'lowed I was anyways competent to tackle the job in a deep-sea vessel of her draught an' tonnage. 'Twas a lucky thing fur me we had a fair wind an' all plain sailin'. As it was, though the night was coolish, my hands were so slimy with sweat that I could sca'ce keep my holt on the spokes, an' they was big beads a-runnin' down my face an' blindin' me like the salt spray does in a hurricane. Fur I cal'lated every other moment I'd hear the crunch of her bows on a ledge an' feel the bite o' that knife in my heart.

"Howsomedever, fust thing I knowed we'd cl'ared the p'int an' was stan'in' down to'ard Dumplin's. The bully alongside o' me put up his knife, an' hazed his crew aloft to crowd all sail on her. She wan't slow, nuther, to feel the pull o' that extry canvas, an' we went a-kitin' on down past Cuttyhunk, past Gay Head, an' in less'n no time was a-swingin' to the long surges o' the broad Atlantic. I tell ye, boy, it was all done slick an' pretty as ye'd wanta see, even if they was a pack o' Portugees.

" 'Long about this time the head rascal came to

me ag'in an' tol' me to lay the course sou'-by-east, which I held till daybreak. Then a cuss they'd put in the foretop sung out, 'Sail ho! on the sta'bo'rd bow.' 'Twan't long afore I see her myself — a coastin' schooner she was, a stan'in down the coast under full sail. Wan't no harm in her, fur's I could see; but she 'peared to raise consider'ble excitement 'mongst them Portugees. They bunched together for'ard o' the mainmast, jest out o' my hearin', an' held a reg'lar red-hot town-meetin' fur quite a spell. Then the Moderator he come aft an' commenced to put me through the catechism: How would my Excellency steer — they're turrible perlite, them Portugees — to git cl'ar o' shippin'? Waal, that was a question I didn't jest rightly know how to tackle, the sea hereabouts bein' lousy with shippin', so to speak. So I jest made a bluff at it, an' tol' him sou'-east. An' how long did my Excellency advise holdin' that course, afore stan'in' away fur our destination? That wan't so hard. It would depend, I tol' him, on whar his Excellency 'lowed he was a-goin'. He thought a minute; then — S'posin' he was a-goin' to Madeiry, says he. In that case, I said, I cal'lated his Excellency mought hold to the course till nigh on to eight bells, noon. An' how would my Excellency change the course at noon in order to arrive at Madeiry? Now he'd ought to have knowed, bein' a sailor, that I'd have to take an observation an' figger out my position, afore I could lay a true course; an' that's jest what I tol' him. But all he done was to sorta grin at me, an' ask the same question right

over agin. So, rememberin' how the Scriptur' says, 'A fool critter allers gits a fool answer,' I tol' him that, come eight bells, his Excellency oughta squar' her round till the compass showed east-sou'east-by-east, which wan't no more'n a bald-headed guess, though it 'peared to give him as much satisfaction 's if 'twas Gospel. He jest bowed politely, an' sings out fur a hand to come aft an' relieve my Excellency. Waal, I wan't noways sorry to be relieved, fur all I'd be'n through had sorta took it out o' me. But instead o' sendin' me below to my hammock, like a Christian, the grinnin' devil knocked me off the deck with a marlinspike, an' then kicked me down the main hatch. An' here I be'n ever sence."

"Who are these men, Cocky?" I asked, trying hard to keep a tremor out of my voice.

Cocky hesitated an instant, I thought.

"Waal, Master Slocum," he drawled, "I couldn't rightly say."

"Have you ever seen any of them before?"

"The light wan't noways bright, boy," he said doubtfully. "I couldn't sca'cely git even the cut o' their jib."

"Do you think they're the men who attacked you on the shore road?"

I felt the start he gave.

"I didn't git to see them, nuther; they come on me from behind."

"Could they be — " my voice was a whisper, tense from excitement, "could they be some of the crew that escaped from the slaver?"

"Slaver?" repeated Cocky innocently; "what slaver?"

"Why, your slaver — the one you were wrecked in off Brazil. You know."

Cocky attempted a chuckle, but it was patently forced. Then he said solemnly: "Boy, they wan't never no sech thing as that thar slaver."

"What!" I exclaimed.

"No, sir! It wan't nothin' on'y yarns."

"And you told us what wasn't true?"

He coughed apologetically. "Waal, ye see, it's one o' my failin's, is yarns. They's some that runs natcherly to liquor, but with me — " here he broke off abruptly.

"Now jest look a-here, boy," he continued brightly, after a moment's silence, "they ain't no call fur to git scairt. These here Portugees is on'y a passel o' skylarkin' sailor-men, an' they've gone an' stole this here vessel fur a — waal, fur a sort of a joke. They'll cruise 'round in her fur a few hours, or mebbe a day or two, an' then they'll take her back, same way we come."

"But they choked you, and threatened you with their knives, and kicked you down the hold, and knocked you over the head with a marlinspike — that's a queer kind of a joke. And you said you'd given them the course to steer to reach Madeira."

"So I did, so I did; but that don't signify we're a-goin' thar, does it? Bein' afloat an' out o' soundin's, they natcher'ly gotta lay some course, ain't they?"

I said nothing. I felt that Cocky was trying to deceive me — possibly with the innocent purpose of keeping up my spirits, but possibly, too, for some guilty reason of his own. I gathered from all that had happened and from all that Cocky had told me an impression that weakened my confidence in the little man. It even occurred to me that he might be secretly in league with the piratical Portuguese who had seized the ship, and that his tale of ill-treatment at their hands might have been told merely to throw dust in my eyes. But notwithstanding these terrible suspicions I believed that he had a sincere regard for me, and that however unworthy he might be in other respects, I could still look confidently to him for help and protection.

"Master Slocum," he said at last, breaking in upon my thoughts with words that ran surprisingly close to them, "you jest trust to me. You 'n me's be'n shipmates this fur, an' I cal'late we'll stick together fur quite a spell yit. Now if we can't weather this here squall, w'y, they ain't the timber in us I think they be, an' you kin write us down a pa'r o' lubberly Dutchmen. These here blaggards is turrible easy riled. I know, 'cause I've shipped with their like many a time. Our job is not to rile 'em. I'll sot right here, whar they put me, an' ye'll sot tight in the storeroom, whar they put ye. Then if so be ye should need me, why — have ye got a few fathoms o' fishline in yer pocket? That's the boy! We'll string this here line from here to thar. If ye need me, give one yank; if ye 'low ye'd like to come down

an' visit me, give her two yanks. Same thing t'other way round fur me. An' three yanks is a sign o' danger."

So we stretched the cord where it had a clear run from Cocky's berth under the main hatch aft to the grid and up through it to the place where I had been put. As time went on, we elaborated upon the first simple code so that at last we could communicate almost as readily as could Mr. Morse over his electrified wires.

IX

COCKY CAPTURES HIS CAPTORS

THREE or four days passed, punctuated only by the visits of the cook bringing a pittance of food and drink, which he never failed to flavor with prophecies of evil. Fortunately for us both, my father had had a large marine clock set in the cabin bulkhead, and unless there was an unusual stir on deck I could hear the clear-toned bell as it struck off the half hours of the watches. This enabled me so to time my visits to Cocky and Cocky's visits to me that they would not clash with the coming of the cook. I remember that one of our devices for passing the time was my transmission of the strokes of the clock to Cocky in the hold. Our fishline telegraph had a leaden sinker at each end, which hung within a few inches of the deck. From my end the line ran first upward over a hook, then downward through the grid and forward just beneath the deck beams to the main hatch, where it was hung over a nail. A twitch at either end of the line produced at the other end a sharp knock against the deck planks, which formed the basis of our system of communication.

About the fifth day there came a sudden change in the weather, as we recognized from the more violent motion of the vessel and the greater force of the waves as they broke against her planks. Cocky, who

claimed a knowledge, little short of marvelous, of what was going on outside, declared that the first squall caught her under too great a spread of canvas and laid her on her beam ends. When she righted, they had the sense to bring her into the wind and take in sail, and she was now riding out the gale under a storm trysail. Having neither bunks nor hammocks, we were very much knocked about and bruised during this heavy weather, and on the first day of it I was — for the first time in my life — wretchedly seasick. The storm lasted three days. On the morning of the fourth, waking from an unusually restful sleep, I was pleased to find the vessel again steady and easy in her motion.

"Boy," said Cocky, as soon as he heard me approaching through the darkness, "we'll have to make it a short one this mornin'. An' mind ye keep yer ears open an' yer legs handy fer jumpin', soon's ye hear 'em at that thar hatch."

"What?" said I, "hasn't the cook come yet?"

"Oh, yes, he's be'n a'ready. Come jest arter you struck eight bells. But they's another on 'em comin' below this mornin'."

"What makes you think that?"

"Waal, ye see, Bill, the pesky critters is plumb lost."

"Lost?"

"Lost they be, an' no mistake," asseverated Cocky. "Ye see, I laid down their course fur 'em last Thursday. Now, ef so be they hadn't be'n no storm, an' the wind held stiddy, an' they'd hove the log now an'

agin, they mought 'a' knowed whar they was, some-'eres round a hun'erd mile or so. But that thar storm knocked 'em endways, so they ain't no more idee whar they be 'n a hen in a hogshead o' rum. Them Portugees is mebbe lubbers; but I'll bet a doughnut thar's gumption enough amongst 'em to keep 'em from the foolishness o' layin' down a new course afore they's an observation took. An' they ain't no one aboard this vessel that kin take an observation fur 'em 'cept on'y me. I tell ye, boy, we're like the dog with the fleas — we got 'em where the hair is short."

"What are you — " The sound of footsteps on the deck over our heads silenced the question on my lips. Waiting only to hear hands fumbling at the fastenings of the hatch, I crept away to the after hold. Silently I closed the big doors after me, leaving the merest crack between them, so that I might see and hear as much as possible of the interview without betraying my own presence. Scarcely had I established myself to my satisfaction, when the hatch was lifted and a glimmer of attenuated daylight fell upon Cocky and the part of the hold in his immediate vicinity. Then a short stepladder was pushed down, and a man warily descended, blinking about in the darkness and pointing a pistol at Cocky's head. Of the colloquy that followed I understood not a word, as it was carried on in the Portuguese tongue; but for all that I could gather from the manner and gestures of the two men some sense of what was going forward between them. First the

Portuguese, a short, squat man with heavy black moustachios and little squinting eyes set deep in a pockmarked face, uttered what was obviously a command, speaking in a fierce, arrogant tone. To this Cocky replied briefly and with an inimitable assumption of careless indifference. The Portuguese started, and with a string of words that must, from their vehemence, have been pretty nearly all oaths, pressed the muzzle of his pistol to Cocky's side. At this the little man laughed sneeringly, while my heart stood still, for I thought he was surely a dead man. But after a period of suspense that seemed to me endless, the fellow slowly lowered the pistol to his side, and in a more civil tone of voice asked a question. Cocky replied at considerable length and with as much fluency as assurance. And so they went on, arguing, wrangling, questioning, and bargaining, until, quite to my surprise, they at last came to an apparent agreement, and ascended the ladder together.

Somewhat alarmed at this outcome, and to say the truth not altogether confident of Cocky's loyalty, I climbed up through the hatch to my prison-house to await developments. I had at first entertained the idea of concealing myself somewhere in the bowels of the ship; but the knowledge that even if my hiding-place remained undiscovered, the torments of hunger and thirst would soon drive me back to my captors, deterred me from any such ill-conceived project. There in the darkness, my thoughts occupied by the terrors that Cocky's hopeful companion-

ship for a time had banished, I listened to the clock in the cabin above as it struck the half hours: four bells; five bells; six bells; and then, just as I was listening for the next stroke, there came to my ears a louder, clearer note from the quarter-deck far above my head. One, two, three — I counted to eight. At first I thought I had miscounted the strokes of the cabin clock, but a moment later it rang out briskly three paired strokes, followed by a single one. What did it mean? I had recognized the tone of the big ship's bell that had just been set upon the deck abaft of the mizzenmast; but why should it strike eight bells when it still lacked a good half-hour of noon?

While I was still puzzling over this, I heard voices and footsteps in the cabin, and almost immediately the hatch was thrown wide open.

"Come aboard, Master Slocum, come aboard!"

It was Cocky shouting down to me, and Cocky's wiry brown arms, scarce visible to my dazzled eyes, stretched down. With one quick heave he lifted me through the hatchway and landed me on the cabin floor at his side.

"Now we're all shipshape," he said heartily, as I stood blinking and rubbing my eyes in the sunlight that shone brightly down upon us through the sky-light. When at last I regained the power to see things about me, I perceived that there were two other men besides Cocky in the cabin. Black-haired, black-bearded fellows they were, short and thickset, their skins browned by sun and weather, their ears

pierced and adorned with thin gold rings. I saw they were staring fixedly at me, and were grinning in a manner evidently meant to be reassuring.

"This here is our cap'n, Master Slocum," said Cocky, "Cap'n Juan Pedro, an' Miguel Maria, his fust mate."

The rascals bowed low to me with a great show of courtesy, gesticulating and grimacing the while in what they evidently considered a most ingratiating manner.

"Vare please," said the taller of the two. "No spik Ang-liss."

Then we all sat down about the bare cabin-table, Cocky and I on one side, and the two Portuguese on the other. Cocky, having taken from his pocket a well-worn, tarry notebook and a stub of a pencil, began to figure in it. After much scribbling, scratching of the head, and sucking of the pencil, he apparently arrived at a satisfactory result, for he laid down the notebook with a sigh of relief and, turning to the "captain," addressed him in Portuguese. In response to this the fellow turned to a battered old sea-chest which stood against the bulkhead, opened it, and took out a roll of dog-eared charts, which he laid upon the table. Cocky selected one of them, and having spread it upon the table, carefully pricked out our position with a crazy pair of calipers. There they sat, all three of them, their elbows squared upon the table, their heads bent close over the chart, and their eyes scowling down upon the little cross Cocky had marked. He, laying his finger upon it, ad-

dressed a few words to them in their own tongue. They nodded, looked at one another, and then shot a question at him. Cocky's brief reply evidently satisfied them, for they nodded again and, turning, passed up the companionway to the deck.

"What does it all mean, Cocky?" I asked, as soon as they were out of hearing.

"Jest what I tol' ye," said he with a grin. "They was lost, an' they had to git me to find them agin. I took my squint at the sun an' made it eight bells. This here clock ain't no chronometer, but she's a durn good timekeeper, an' if my longitood's more'n a minute or two out, I'll give ye leave to call me a Dutchman. Latitood same way, on'y a mite closer, the sun bein' right on time an' c'rect to a quarter second or less. So that's our exact position at noon to-day." And again he placed his finger on the penciled cross in the midst of a blue expanse labeled *Atlantic Ocean,* while he cocked his eye up at me with the queer twisted grin on his face.

"But what's going to become of us?" said I anxiously. "Have we got to go with them all the way to Madeira?"

"They ain't a-goin' to Madeiry."

"Why, I thought you said — "

"So I did, sonny, so I did. But I was mistook, 'r else the rascals lied to me. Now they've got me to lay a course fur the nearest o' the Azores, which is Corvo."

"That's just as bad. Can't we speak a passing ship that will take us home, or somewhere near it?"

"Now, now, boy, don' ye go fur to git excited. Jest take things easy an' trust to me. Hain't I got ye out o' that thar black hole below, an' sot ye here in the cabin like a gentleman?"

"Yes, Cocky; but you haven't told me yet how you got them to let us out."

An expression of complacent cunning crossed his face, and he winked slowly at me.

"Ye don't cal'late," he said, "I went to all this here trouble fur nothin', do ye? I druv' a bargain with the blaggards: 'Go ahead,' I tol' 'em. 'Ye've got ye into a pesky tight fix; now jest ye git out of it agin, best way ye kin. Set yer own course, an' sail to Davy Jones, an' be durned to ye!' That's what I tol' 'em, I did. They knowed durn well that if they was to do their own navigatin' 'twould be jest the same thing as goin' it blind, an' more'n likely they'd run foul o' some guv'ment vessel, or else bring up in a po't whar they'd have to give an account o' themselves. So they says, 'Name yer price,' says they in Portugee. 'Name yer price, an' we'll sot ye safe ashore at Fayal.'

"'How about the youngster?' says I.

"'Oh!' says they, 'he fell overboard an' was drownded day afore yestiddy.'

"'Waal,' says I, — it bein' onperlite to call a man a liar in Portugee, — 'if so be the boy's drownded, ye kin all go hang!' Which was a delicate hint to remind 'em how they all had ropes round their necks.

"At that they began to back and fill, tryin' to find some way out o' the fix, but sca'ce knowin' which

tack to stand away on. Then finally they 'lowed mebbe ye hadn't gone overboard, though ye'd missed it by a narrer squeak — which wan't fur from the truth nuther. Arter that I agreed to bargain with 'em, an' we went at it hammer an' tongs, me peart an' sassy as a sparrer, an' them gittin' more an' more oxcited every minute. Waal, swan to man if I didn't cal'late they'd bust wide open afore they'd give in, but they did, goll dast 'em! They agreed to give us both the freedom o' the ship, as long's we behaved. We're to berth aft, an's soon's we git to Fayal they'll sot us ashore — leastways, that's what they said they'd do."

"So we're really safe now," I said with a sigh of relief.

"Safe as a church," said Cocky, "until we sight the islands. But I don't trust the divils no more'n I would a shark with a chunk o' pork. I got 'em one way, though — sorta hinted round that if any accident happens to you, we'd be liable to lose our way an' bring up in Lisbon harbor or mebbe Gibraltar. Once they set their eyes on their own country, my holt on 'em's gone, an' we'll have to save our skins the best way we kin. My idee is that if they cal'lated 'twas anyways safer fur them, they'd wring our necks an' heave us over the side as quick as a wink."

Although this was far from reassuring to me at the time, it troubled me only for a day or two. In a surprisingly short time we had settled down to the routine of the life on shipboard. The berth that Cocky and I shared was roomy and comfortable, and

the food served by Tony, the cook, was wholesome and ample enough to satisfy our appetites. It has always been a mystery to me how those Portuguese supplied the ship with provisions and water for the voyage. They certainly could not have brought with them in the whaleboat enough to feed twelve men and a boy for three weeks: it must have been that they had made several visits before Cocky had been put aboard as night watchman, filling the water butts a little at a time, and storing away pork and beef and bread in hiding-places which we failed to discover. During the last four days of the voyage, it is true, we were all put on short rations of both bread and water; but throughout the twenty days preceding, the cabin table at least had been generously supplied.

On the whole we had no fault to find with our treatment. All the crew, ruffians though they were, used me with the greatest courtesy, and showed Cocky the utmost respect. In spite of the titles of "captain" and "mate," assumed by the two ringleaders, Cocky's authority in all matters of discipline and seamanship was supreme; and I soon observed that he had from the first established the strict routine of duty that holds on the better class of American packets and merchantmen. The crew — Portuguese from the Azores, Canaries, and Cape Verdes, where all men are born sailors — were quick to appreciate his seamanship, and honored him for his knowledge of navigation.

As my knowledge of Portuguese grew, I began speaking to this or that member of the crew. I found

them civil enough, but at the same time extremely reticent, replying usually to my question with "Quem sabe?" or perhaps a mere shrug. Cocky told me their courtesy was all on the surface, and simply was a part of their language, which is certainly a very polite one. For the rest, they seemed to be excellent sailors, quick, daring, and sure-footed aloft as so many cats. Excitable they were, and prone to lose their heads in sudden danger, but for all that quite undeserving of the epithet, "swabs," or "lubbers," which Cocky often applied to them. As I came to know them better, I lost much of my fear of them, taking them to be simple, kindly fishermen. And yet shortly before we sighted the Azores I saw knives flash out at a word, and before Cocky and Juan Pedro could intervene, there was not a little blood spilled.

X

OFF THE AZORES

From the time of our release the voyage was for many days uneventful. The weather held fair, with a light northerly breeze, which veered to the north-east towards the end of the week, and then gradually fell to a flat calm. This trying condition lasted two or three days, and as Cocky put it, "riled up consid'able" the impatient temper of our crew. Then, to the great relief of us all, a good breeze sprang up in the south, quickly freshening almost to the weight of a gale, and carried us briskly onward under reefed courses and topsails. It must have been on the fourth or fifth day of this stiff breeze that Cocky, taking advantage of a moment of privacy, informed me that we would sight Corvo on the following morning.

"What will happen then?" I asked.

"Waal, I dunno," said he, "'cept I 'low they'll take command o' the ship agin, soon's they smell home. They won't need me arter that, seein' as they're mighty fine pilots in their home waters. If so be they ain't got no more use fur a navigator, mebbe they'll sot us ashore an' let us go; if they have, an' they can't git no one besides me, they'll sartin sure keep an a'mighty tight holt on us."

"Then you don't think they'll keep their promise to you?"

"Not if they cal'late it'll pay 'em better to break it, I don't — no siree!"

This was scarcely encouraging, but as we neither of us could think of a way to cope with any impending treachery there seemed no alternative but to trust to Providence and to the faint hope that our captors would find it to their own advantage to fulfill their part of the bargain.

When I went on deck the next morning, there were a few hazy blue streaks to be seen on the eastern horizon to confirm Cocky's prophecy. In the bows was a group of excited sailors, chattering, pointing, and gesticulating like so many children. Miguel Maria was at the wheel, with Juan Pedro close beside him, both wreathed in smiles, and voluble in their expressions of gratitude and congratulation to Cocky, who grinned carelessly back at them from a comfortable seat under the bulwarks. It was clear that they had already recognized the land in the distance as part of their own country, and were in the best of humor. But quite as apparent was the fact that Cocky was no longer in command of the ship. The course was shifted and the trim of the sails altered without so much as a glance in his direction; and the watch on deck were neglecting the usual morning duties, openly and unreproved. I soon perceived that Juan Pedro was not at all in a hurry to draw in close to the land; on the contrary he ordered sail shortened when the nearest point on the

shore was still a matter of twelve miles from the ship, and then, luffing, drifted lazily past the island, until it was again a mere blue smudge on the horizon.

All day long they stood off and on, just keeping the island in sight, and scouring the horizon for sight of a sail or the smoke of a steam packet. But save for a few small fishing-boats, none of which ventured to approach us, there was not a craft to be seen. Toward nightfall Cocky and I went below for our evening meal, shortly after which we turned in.

I fell asleep at once, and although I slept soundly, the noise of feet tramping the deck, the squeal of cordage in the blocks, the flapping of canvas, and the hoarse voices of the seamen hailing one another, came faintly to my ears and mingled with my dreams. Finally I awoke with a start to see the gray light of dawn in the porthole and find that the myriad of sounds heard on a vessel at sea had given place to a silence almost oppressive. Through the porthole there was nothing to be seen but the heavy morning mist, and the door, when I tried it, was locked.

Cocky began to stir, and to turn restlessly; then he yawned, stretched himself, and at last opened his eyes.

"Waal, boy," he said, "we're come to anchor."

"Yes," said I; "and they've locked us fast in the room."

"Sure's shootin'. I heerd 'em tarn the key at midnight."

"Where do you suppose we are?"

"Som'er's in the lee o' one o' their pesky little islands, I reckon."

"Aren't they going to let us go?" I asked in a voice that would tremble in spite of me.

"Waal, Bill," said Cocky, cheerfully ignoring the childish emotion that my voice betrayed, "this here is how I figger it out: these Portugees ain't aimin' fur to steal this vessel jest on'y fur the fun of it. Nor they ain't a-goin' to anchor her off the shore here, an' then set down on the front stoop an' look at 'er. No, sir! They've got a notion they kin git some good out of 'er; mebbe it's to sail her som'er's where they's cargo to be got or profit to be made; an' again mebbe it's to sell or to swap her. If they cal'late to sell her, then this here is most prob'ly the place whar they're aimin' to do their bargainin'. If they cal'late to make a voyage in her, this is whar they'll ship their stores, water, navigator, an' crew. Either way you put it, they'd keep us safe under lock an' key ontil they'd got things fixed the way they want 'em. Ye see, if they was to set us ashore a mite too soon, we mought git the wind of 'em by lettin' on how they'd stole the vessel out o' New Bedford harbor."

At six bells the cook, with one of the crew at his back, opened the door and handed in breakfast; but they were both dumb to all our questions. So we ate the slender meal as slowly as possible, and then settled down to pass the long hours of inactivity as patiently as we might. For the most part all was silent aboard the vessel, though occasional footfalls on the deck and the faint murmur of voices some-

where away forward proved that we were not her only occupants. Toward noon there was an unusual stir on deck, and we heard distant voices hailing the ship and others close at hand shouting in reply. Then came the splash of oars and the creak of rowlocks, as a boat approached, and finally the sound of men scrambling up over the side. From then on there was constant noise and bustle over our heads: the clumping and thumping of footsteps back and forth, the monotonous song of men hauling on ropes, the squealing of blocks, the knocking and scraping and bumping, that told of heavy weights being lifted to the deck and lowered away into the hold.

"Shippin' crew an' cargo," said Cocky with a nod and a wink.

About six bells things quieted down again. The afternoon had turned very warm, especially in our close little room with its small porthole. Cocky had stretched himself on his bunk and was snoring peacefully, and I, lying prone on the floor, was drowsing over a copy of *The Water Witch,* which I had left aboard the ship some weeks before. As I languidly turned the familiar pages, boylike and restless from confinement, I kicked my legs aimlessly to and fro from one bulkhead to the other. Once or twice in the course of these excursions the toe of my shoe came in contact with a solid obstruction under the bunk. This at first failed to arouse my curiosity, but finally an extra-hard kick elicited such a strange metallic clatter from the thing as to distract my attention at once from Cooper's narrative. Reaching

under the bunk, I drew out an oblong wooden tray such as carpenters use to carry their tools, and found in it a dozen of the usual implements of the trade.

A moment's reflection told me that it must have been left there by one of the finishers working in or about the cabin the day before the ship was carried off. From that my mind flew to the cutting of the hatch in the floor of the lazaret where I had been confined. This I knew was one of the last bits of carpentering done in that end of the vessel: I had watched the men at work, and remembered perfectly the way they had gone about it. With that recollection came an idea that for a moment made me gasp from excitement.

Why could I not cut a hatchway now in the deck where I sat?

The cabin without was apparently deserted, and Cocky's resonant snoring would surely cover all the noise I might make. A glance at the sun proved that it would be at least two hours before Tony was due with our supper. So I picked out the smallest auger in the tray and set to work. Fortunately for me the tool was sharp, for the wood was hard and the planking double.

In half an hour's time I had bored four holes, through which I inserted the tip of the smallest saw. My strokes, at first necessarily very short, I timed so that they coincided with Cocky's snore —three quick strokes and a pause, three quick strokes and a pause. But as the slowly increasing length of the cut gave freer play to the saw,

I modified my tempo, first to two strokes and then to one stroke to each rasping inspiration. It was slow hard work for a boy of my muscle; but I kept at it manfully until the three strokes of the cabin clock warned me that Tony would soon be there. The result of my work was a cut through the planking some sixteen to eighteen inches in length. Most of the sawdust had fallen through into the lazaret. What little remained on the surface of the planks I swept carefully into the holes and rubbed into the cut. I had only just finished this, and was pushing back the tray of tools to its hiding-place under the bunk, when I heard someone moving about in the cabin, and a clatter of dishes on the table. Then came heavy footfalls, clumping down the companion, and the voices of several Portuguese talking together. A few minutes later Tony's entrance with our food found me sprawled idly on the deck right over the cut in the planking, apparently too intent on my book to move. Cocky, who had wakened at the opening of the door, took the food from him, and told me impatiently to get up and eat my supper; but I would not stir until I heard the door shut and the click of the bolt. As we ate, I told him of my find and showed him what I had already done. He whistled softly through his teeth, and listened with a grin while I told him how I had timed my saw-strokes to his snores.

"Waal, of all the smart cusses!" he said with a cock of his eye at me. "If that ain't in-gee-nigh-us, I wanta know!"

Then, after several minutes devoted to eating and meditation, he asked anxiously: —

"Kin ye snore any, Bill?"

"I never tried," said I. "Not that I know of."

"Waal, it's easy larned: I'm a master han' at it — my shipmates in the fo'cas'le always 'lowed I was. Seems to me it ain't sca'cely squar I should do all the snorin' an' ye should do all the work — not a boy like you. So jest stretch yerself out on that thar bunk, an' when ye git tooned up to the proper notch, I'll take a spell with the saw myself."

"Suppose I lie down on the deck right across the door?"

"What fur? Them planks is almighty hard, son. Ye'll lay a sight easier on the bunk."

"Yes, but if I lie close to the door, and pretend to be asleep, you'll have a chance to get things cleared up before they can open the door."

"Waal, now, I swan to man! I never see sech a boy fur idees!"

As soon as Tony had removed our tin cups and platters we began to work. I took my place by the door, and under Cocky's tuition was soon snoring lustily. The Portuguese in the cabin continued to talk earnestly and at times excitedly, while the clink of glass told us that the wine bottle was going around the table. Cocky went to work with a will, showing his dexterity in the use of tools by the rapid progress he made with surprisingly little noise. I noticed that he improved upon my method by making his cuts on a bevel, so that when he finished the loose

section of planking would not drop through. Now and then he had to stop work for a few moments, when I heard someone approaching the door, or when there was a lull in the conversation around the table. Just as he had completed the cut — it must have been close to eight bells — we marked a note of anger in the voices on the other side of the bulkhead. Cocky, who had lifted out the square section of the deck, was sweeping into the space below every crumb of sawdust that he could feel, for he was working in the dark. At the tense staccato of their words and the high-pitched tones that spoke of anger ill-restrained, he stopped and crouched there listening intently.

"That thar means a fight," he whispered. "No Portugee'll stand *that!* The knives'll be out next."

And in the next breath we heard a rush, a volley of short, sharp cries, and then a high, piercing scream that came near to freezing the marrow in my bones.

Scarcely breathing, we waited until the silence that followed was broken by a few low gutturals in the cabin. Then Cocky, with his coat and mine, and with the scanty bedding, made the rude semblance of a sleeping form in each bunk. By that time the noise outside was less violent, but still loud enough to cover our movements; so Cocky, taking me by the shoulders, dropped me through the hole in the floor. In the next moment he was beside me, landing as light as a cat. He lifted me to his shoulder.

"Close up that thar hole," he whispered.

That done, we cautiously felt our way to the hatchway, dropped through it into the afterhold,

and scurried forward like a pair of rats to Cocky's lair under the main hatch. It was fortunate for us that this, as well as the hatch in the upper deck, opened for the shipping of stores, had not yet been closed again. I went up first, mounting again to Cocky's shoulder. As for him, the nimble little man scarcely needed the hand I stretched down, to spring up after me. When we finally emerged upon the open deck, it was apparently deserted. The glow from the portholes in the afterhouse lighted the deck but dimly, and from the open companionway a murmur of voices came up from the cabin below. Cocky drew me into the deep shadow between the mainmast and the galley, and then crept away forward.

He was back again in a few moments.

"Boat moored alongside," he whispered. "Sta'bo'd fore chains."

Grasping me by the arm, he guided me to the starboard bulwarks just abaft the fore chains, sprang lightly over the rail, and standing there on the chain plate, induced me, partly by his helping hand and partly by the encouragement of his presence, to clamber over and take a place by his side. That accomplished, he fell to his knees upon the narrow footing, and groping about in the darkness beneath him, grasped a dimly seen rope. The next moment he had glided noiselessly down into the black depths below.

By this time my heart was throbbing wildly. I was horribly afraid, not only of the dark void under my feet, but much more of a dead man and the

bloodthirsty murderers in the cabin. For all that I clung stoutly to the tarry chains, and with dry mouth and quaking knees watched the rope down which Cocky had disappeared. For a few seconds it was stretched taut by his weight, then it suddenly relaxed, while there came up to me a faint thump and the lapping of the disturbed water far below. The rope grew taut again, and Cocky's voice came up: —

"Come along!" he said in a low tone.

I gasped, gritted my teeth, and dropped down until I could grip the rope with my toes. Once fairly launched, the feel of the rope in my hands and between my knees and ankles gave me a singular sense of security; my fear vanished, and I found the descent ridiculously easy. But to change my hold from the chains to the rope had taken the last particle of my ebbing courage.

"Good boy!" said Cocky, as I slid into his arms. "I knowed ye had grit."

Having stationed me in the bow ready to cast off the painter, Cocky took his stand amidships with one of the oars in his hands. Just at that moment, however, there came disquieting sounds from the deck above us. To our relief the movement was a slow one, suggesting the shuffling steps of men carrying a heavy burden. We heard them move slowly to the bulwarks somewhere about amidships; then after a pause there was a loud splash astern of the boat we were in. I thought they had lowered a boat from the davits, but Cocky knew better.

"Cast loose," he whispered.

Silently he pushed the boat forward, keeping close under the bows, under the hawser, the cutwater, and well round to the port side. Only then, when he had put the bulk of the vessel between us and the men on her deck, did he take the oars and begin cautiously to pull away from her side. As he rowed we looked about us; the ship was anchored, not in a harbor but, as near as we could see in the dim starlight, in a narrow strait between two headlands. Looking through the strait, we could make out on either hand the faintly traced horizon of the open sea.

"We'll row inshore as close as we dass," said Cocky, "an' look out fur a likely place to land — not too nigh to a village, nuther, not whilst the ship lies in that berth yonder."

As he spoke, a shout went up from the vessel, and clearly over the stretch of water that lay between came the sound of voices calling, the clatter of hurrying feet upon the deck, and finally the creaking of blocks. Cocky stopped rowing.

"They've missed either us or the boat, or like as not, both," he said. "No use to row till we know whar they be. If they keep t'other side o' the vessel, we got a good chanst to git away. If they don't, on'y thing we kin do is to keep quiet; least mite o' sound carries turr'ble plain over the water."

True to his words there presently came to our ears the rhythmic clack of oars against tholepins. It was faint and distant at first, but to my horror grew steadily more and more distinct. Still there was nothing to be seen but the vague blur of the water

and the darker blotch of the Wanderer under her riding-light. Suddenly Cocky clutched my wrist.

"Lay down!" he whispered.

"Do you see them?" I asked in a shaky voice.

"I kin see suthin'," he muttered. "Suthin' that jest blots out the glimmer o' the ridin'-light in the water."

So we stretched out on the gratings of the boat and waited, scarcely daring to breathe. Nearer and nearer came the sound of the oars. Soon we could hear the splash and hiss as they drove through the water. Then came an exclamation from one of her crew, the rowing ceased, and we could hear the men talking together excitedly. Then a challenge rang out: —

"Onde vai-se escapulindo?"

"It's all up, they see us," muttered Cocky. And rising to his feet, he called back: —

"Estou as ordens de vossas merces, senhores."

I stood up beside him, and with a dreary sense of failure and defeat, watched the shadowy boat pull up alongside. Two Portuguese stepped aboard with a line, which they made fast to our bow; and as we were towed back to the ship, these two sat on the thwarts in earnest conversation with Cocky.

XI

COMPOUNDING A FELONY

Upon our return to the Wanderer, Cocky was kept in the cabin, while I was locked alone in another of the six berths that opened from it. Although he managed to pinch my arm before we were parted, and tell me we were in no danger, I must confess that when I heard the bolt shot I threw myself upon the bunk in despair. In the darkness I was dimly conscious of the steady murmur of talk in the cabin; and in the drowsy interval between that outburst of disappointment and homesickness, and the sound sleep that followed it, was dreamily aware of the movement on deck that meant the hoisting of the anchor and the spreading of canvas on the yards.

It was therefore no surprise to me, when I came to myself the following morning, to find we were again tossing on the open sea. To my great relief the door of my room was no longer locked; so I dressed and went on deck, feeling considerably easier in my mind than I had been for many an hour. Cocky, I was thankful to see, was again in charge of the deck, where everything was as orderly and shipshape as a willing crew could make it.

When he came down to breakfast, his leathery little face was wrinkled in a grin, and he pinched my arm quite jovially as he sat down beside me.

"All shipshape agin, son! Tight an' taut alow an' aloft, a fair wind an' a follerin' sea, eh?"

"How ever did you get them to put you in command again, Cocky? And to set me free, too?"

"'Twas mostly luck, an' a consid'able knack at bluffin' an' bargainin' along with it. The way it come about was this: fust off, these here Portugees has their minds sot upon workin' this here vessel to a sartin p'int consid'able to the s'uth'ard. I couldn't tell ye the name o' the place, if so be as it's got a name, me goin' mainly by latitood an' longitood an' sich. I cal'late they aim to pick up a cargo thar or suthin' — mebbe a wreck an' treasure, an' agin mebbe not. They ain't a-sayin' pre-cisely.

"Now, whatever this here idee is, they's about a score of 'em in it — or they was till last night: the twelve that stole the ship, and the eight that come aboard yestiddy. I 'low ye ain't furgot the screech we heerd last night? Waal, that was one o' the eight, an' as luck would have it, the on'y navigator amongst the hull lot. 'Twas all a matter o' words amongst gentlemen over their wine; an onjudicious expression, hot blood, the flash of a knife, an' he was done fur — that's how they told it to me. Arter that they had to git out o' thar quick, him bein' a big man in them parts. Likewise they had to fall back on Cap'n Ellwood fur a navigator. Now this here Cap'n Ellwood always was a great hand at bluffin' an' bargainin'. He jest lay down his terms an' stuck to 'em like a barnacle to a ship's bottom. Either they'd do the way he said, or they could heave the both of us

over the side an' lay their own course hell-bent fur the gallers — he didn't care a cuss which."

"And what were your terms, Cocky?" said I.

"Number one," said Cocky, holding up his thumb and pointing to it with his greasy knife, "number one, the freedom of the ship for the two of us, with a passenger's berth fur Master Slocum. Number two, — " here a long finger stood up beside the thumb, — "a share in the profits o' the v'yage fur me as navigator an' you as owner; an' number three, the vessel herself, arter we've turned the trick an' landed 'em safe an' sound at the Azores agin."

"Why, Cocky," I cried enthusiastically, "that's a splendid bargain!"

"It's the best that could be druv under the sarcumstances. Not but what," he added more soberly, "it has its drawbacks too."

"Drawbacks?" I asked. "What drawbacks could it have?"

"They moughtn't live up to their end of it, fur one thing."

"Oh, yes, that's true, of course! But there's nothing else, is there?"

"Waal," said the little man, cocking his eye at me solemnly, "ef I was a sea lawyer I could likely tell ye what name is give to the crime o' seizing a vessel an' sailin' off with her. It's sartin sure a felony, ef it ain't suthin' a durned sight wuss."

"Yes, I know that; but *we* didn't commit it."

"Mebbe not. But here we be, me navigatin' the vessel fur them as stole her, an' ye sailin' long with

'em, 's friendly 's cockroaches; an' the two of us cal'latin' to go whacks with 'em on the profits of the cruise. Ef so be I was a sea lawyer, that 'ud look to me mighty like compoundin' a felony."

"And what's that, Cocky?"

"That's a-layin' ourselves out to be kotched an' jailed along with 'em."

"But I don't see how that could be. Haven't we done our best to get away from them? And aren't we trying now the only way we can to get the ship back to New Bedford?"

"Mebbe so, Bill, mebbe so. But we spile it all 'cause we aim to go whacks on the profits. Why, fur all we know, they're a-goin' to steal a cargo. That thar is what'll put us in jail. It mought be even wuss'n that; s'posin'," here Cocky's voice sank to a whisper, "s'posin' it's piracy they're up to?"

"We wouldn't take a share of any such profits as that."

"But bless yer innocent heart, boy, they'll make us take it. They're cute, Bill, cute as they make 'em; an' their minds is sot on a-makin' us 'complices. Then, ef they're jailed we're jailed too; an' ef they're hung, we'll hang alongside of 'em."

That stumped me for the moment; but after a little thought I said:

"I'll tell you what we can do, Cocky. We can pretend we're going to take our share, until we see how they mean to make their profits; if they're honestly got — aside from the dishonesty of stealing the ship — we'll keep them, you for your pay for navi-

gating the vessel safe to her home port and I as the owner's representative, for the use of her. If they're not honestly got we'll do our best to return them to the rightful owner."

Cocky sat motionless, his jaw dropped, his head twisted to one side, and his one bright eye boring into me like a gimlet. Then: —

"Mister Slocum," said he impressively, "ef they's one thing ye've got, it's a figgerhead, an' it ain't no wooden one nuther. I can't put it no fairer than that. An' the course ye've laid down, that's the course we'll steer, or ye kin log me fur a swab."

From the Azores we sailed due south, or thereabouts, as I knew from the fact that the sun rose day after day to port, and set to starboard. The wind held fair and strong, the weather fine, and the sea was of a glorious, crisply sparkling blue. For days the monotony of sea life was unbroken by so much as the sight of a sail on the horizon. Every day the heat of the midday sun was growing more and more intense, for we were now well within the tropics. Toward sunset one day I noticed a group of sailors gathered in the bow, pointing, gesticulating, and chattering, as their custom was when any excitement was afoot. I stood watching them, and was staring for some time in the direction they were pointing before I could make out what they were looking at. At length my eye caught a black speck that lay, as I judged, several miles off the starboard bow, and kept appearing and disappearing in a most perplexing manner. As soon as I was convinced

that there was actually something there, I called Cocky to come and take a look at it.

"It's a small boat," said he, after a long squint under his shading hand, "a whaleboat, fur a guess, with mast an' sprits'l edge tow'ds us, so we can't sca'cely see it. Ef we hold on as we be, she'll be alongside in an hour's time. Hop below, Bill, an' git me the glass."

He studied the sea long and earnestly through the telescope before he spoke again.

"Yes, sir," he said at length, "a whaleboat she is, sprits'l rig, an' they ain't no one on'y the man at the tiller in sight. Flyin' a signal o' distress, too, she is."

By this time Juan Pedro and Miguel Maria had joined us, and each of them took his turn at the glass.

"You must change the course," said Juan Pedro in Portuguese, and Miguel Maria nodded.

"They ain't no need o' that," replied Cocky. "We'll bring her alongside the way we lay."

Although my slight knowledge of the tongue would enable me to follow the talk no further, it was quite obvious that the Portuguese were persistently urging upon Cocky a course that he just as resolutely refused to pursue. Finally, with a gesture — for the little man was fully as fluent with their gesticulations as he was with their speech — with a gesture that said, as plain as words, "Do your worst, I wash my hands of you," he turned his back upon them and walked away.

At this the Portuguese, their faces black with

anger, started after him; but immediately thinking better of it, they stopped, and instead began to pace the deck, talking together with lowered voices. After several minutes of this, Juan Pedro, with a shrug of his shoulders and a meaning glance at his companion, crossed the deck to where Cocky stood. From the oily tone of his voice and his ingratiating manner I knew he was making his humble submission to his stubborn sailing-master.

When he joined me at the rail, Cocky was still bubbling over with indignation.

"The devils!" he said. "The black, cruel devils! Wanted me to show the starn to that poor seaman yonder, an' give him a wide berth."

"What did you say to them, Cocky?"

"Say to 'em? I give 'em one tremenjus tongue-lashin', I did, an' tol' 'em to go to blazes."

"I thought they looked mad. But what made them give in to you?"

"They give in," said Cocky, "becuz they knowed I wouldn't make no observation nor lay down their course ontil they did — not fur all the blacklegs an' bloody knives that ever slit a throat."

I was somewhat taken aback by the unassuming heroism of the little man, who for the sake of a stranger in distress, unhesitatingly risked my life as well as his own at the hands of the unscrupulous villains who held the ship. He doubtless knew his world, counting that, rather than imperil the success of their enterprise, they would yield to his demand. And yet, knowing them for an impulsive people, he

must have realized that his importunity might easily provoke them to sudden unthinking violence, which we should neither of us live to see them repent.

Meanwhile the whaleboat had drawn in so close that we could plainly make out all its details. There was but a single man aboard her, a tall, gaunt, gray-headed seaman, with a wisp of white beard on his chin. To the top of the sprit that held up the lug of the sail was lashed a pair of red undergarments that fluttered bravely in the wind.

"How did you know," said I, "that was meant for a signal of distress?"

"It's plain enough," said he, "to a man that knows the natur' o' sailor-men, an' the way their minds works. Ensign, union down, is the signal o' distress the world over: becuz why? Becuz it's sech a lubberly, onseemly way to h'ist the ensign, that on'y a landlubber or a seafarin' man in distress could bring hisself to do it. Now a shipwrecked mariner, havin' no ensign handy, would nater'ly h'ist the most lubberly onseemly rag he could find. Most on 'em would mebbe fly their shirt-tails; but ef they was a mariner that was pertic'ler modest an' delicate, an' he was in a pertic'ler tight place, it 'ud come a durn sight more nat'ral to him to fly his underclothes."

As he made this remarkable announcement, Cocky clapped the telescope to his eye for a final look at the man in the whaleboat.

"Waal, of all the — " he began, as he lowered the glass; but there he choked, spluttered, and stood speechless. Then in a voice suppressed almost to a

whisper, "Why, goll durn my skin, I'll be etarnally slock-walloped ef it ain't Abner!

"Ahoy, thar, Abner!" he hailed in his foghorn voice. "Heave to, shipmate, an' come aboard!

"As I'm a mis'able, sinful cuss, Mister Slocum," he said to me, "it's Abner Kimball, ship's carpenter, an' the modestest man afloat!"

XII

A MEETING ON THE SEA'S HIGHWAY

As he clambered painfully over the rail and stood at hand-clasps with Cocky, I studied Abner Kimball well. His tall gaunt figure, his gray hair and wisp of a beard I had already noted. Now I saw that he had a stoop which brought his shoulders to the level of Cocky's head; that he stood shakily on his legs; and that his long bony arms were all of a tremble. His lips under the straggling gray moustachios and the tongue that protruded between them were swollen, cracked, and crusted, but on either side of the pinched aquiline nose his eyes looked out clear and steady from under the gray-thatched brows, like moonlight on polished steel.

"It's the thirst, ol' shipmate," said Cocky tenderly, "the killin' thirst. *I* know, Abner, *I* know. Here, boy, a pannikin o' water, quick; an' then run below an' git my flask o' rum."

When I returned from the latter errand, I found the old man stretched on the deck, and Cocky bathing his temples with the water, a few drops of which he now and then allowed to trickle over the crusted tongue. What was left in the pannikin he seasoned with a dash of the rum; then he went on with his nursing as deftly and as tenderly as a woman. Under these ministrations the old fellow began to

brighten and straighten like a drought-stricken weed under a gentle rain; and before darkness fell he was able to go below to Cocky's berth, where he slept soundly till morning.

At breakfast he was almost himself again, doing full justice to the substantial food that Tony set before him. Between his mouthfuls he talked to Cocky, as to an old friend. His language showed a good choice of words, and fair understanding of their meaning; but in grammar and pronunciation he was as faulty and uncertain as Cocky. At all times his bearing was dignified almost to a degree of hauteur, and the glare in his gray eyes told of a temper that would ill brook contradiction or restraint. Before the end of the meal Cocky had acquainted him with our adventures and our predicament. Afterward, when we had established ourselves comfortably on deck in the shadow of the awning, the little man said: —

"What sot ye adrift in that thar whaleboat, Abner?"

Kimball, who had been rolling a wad of black long-cut tobacco into a compact ball, paused long enough to shoot it into the hollow of his cheek, and to suck at it tentatively two or three times.

"Waal, Cap'n Ellwood, the eventuality that sot me adrift was chiefly occasioned by ondue relaxation of discipline. What occurred to me this day two weeks would 'a' be'n an onheerd-of unpossibility in a vessel under your salubrious control, Cap'n, same 's it would 'a' be'n under the salutary dispensation o'

most any o' the commandin' officers I could enumerate. But it could eventuate, an' it onequivocally did eventuate, aboard o' the whalin' vessel, Susan T. Spare, Cap'n Willard Tubby, commandin' officer an' navigator."

"Hm!" said Cocky, "he always was a swab, a lubberly swab!"

"It commenced," continued Abner, "aboard o' Number Four, when the boats was retracin' their steps to the ship, a-towin' a whale they'd jest dispatched. Under ordinary sarcumstances Number Four was the cap'n's boat; but these here sarcumstances was extryordinary, fur the cap'n was confined to his bed with the teethache."

"The teethache!" echoed Cocky. "The boats out arter whale an' the cap'n in bed with the teethache!"

"Consequentially they wan't no one in authority aboard o' Number Four 'ceptin' Bill Judkins, the harpooner. Waal, they dispatched the whale right enough; but when they undertook to tow him back to the ship, Bill he let one o' them obfusticated Canary Islanders he had aboard of him make the line fast to the posterior thwart."

"Po'r Bill, he always was easy."

"Easy!" snorted Abner. "Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear! An' the blame irresponsible imbe-cyle knowed 's well as I did that that thar thwart was strained, an' that I was preparin' to put in a new one the very minute that thar whale hove in sight. So 'twan't supprisin' that when the men commenced to give way the durn thing busted clean

through, an' smacked agin the side so durn vigorous it started a plank.

"Fort'nately, but undesarvedly fur sech a conglomeration o' nincompoops, the boat didn't leak of any account, nor they didn't lose the whale nuther. Waal, when they layed the boat alongside, an' Mr. Huggins, the fust officer, saw the mess they'd made of her, he requested me to repair her immediate. The decks was nat'rally consid'ably mussed up with oil an' blubber from another whale they was cuttin' in, so I jest made fast the painter to the mizzen chains, and dropped down into her with my tools.

"While I was at work thar, my mind occupied exclusive with the bad job that lay under my nose, some blitherin' numskull whose feeble jedgment was overpowered by a pervarted sense of humor went an' cut that thar painter with his spade. Naow I don't know's I object to a joke exactly, even ef it is on me; but when I'd finished my job an' reached fur that painter an' felt it draw slack through the water, I was jest about the peevishest man in the South Atlantic Ocean.

"By that time it was dusk, an' I could see the vessel a dark blur to windward, and before I could git out the oars an' start a-pullin', 'twas black night. Still I knowed she lay to wind'ard, an' commenced to row in that direction; but the wind had breezed up, an' the boat, settin' high an' light on the water, kep' headin' off an' tarnin' broadside to. Soon 's I see that wan't no use, I stepped the mast an' spread the sprits'l, with the idee o' beatin' to wind'ard, whar

I could still see the vessel's ridin'-light, like a star twinklin' low on the horizon. But when the stars come out, it got so dark that blast me if I could tell which was stars an' which was the ridin'-light. Then I got to meditatin' over my perdicament, an' 'twan't long afore I come to the conclusion that I'd be'n driftin' to leeward, an' consequentially the vessel should lie squar' to wind'ard, due allowance made o' course fur currents an' flaws. Accordin'ly I took to makin' even reaches, fust to port an' then to sta'board, countin' slow an' stiddy to five hunnerd fur each reach. I kep' it up all night; but come dawn thar wan't no Susan T. Spare nor no other vessel in the hull vasty sarcumference o' the horizon."

"Whereaway was the wind?" asked Cocky.

"Nor-nor'east, nigh as I could figger it without no compass, same 's it was at sunset."

" 'Twas the set o' the current, then," said Cocky, "or else ye was mebbe asleep."

"Cap'n Ellwood," replied the old man severely, "have I up to this p'int in my narrative made any kind or sort o' reference to sleepin'?"

"Not in my hearin', ye ain't."

"Waal then, rest assured that up to that p'int they wan't no sleepin' done — not aboard that thar whaleboat. The fust thing I done when I see I'd lost the ship was to investigate the state o' the larder."

"He means he lay to an' hustled fur grub," said Cocky to me, in an aside that Abner silently ignored.

"My investigation exposed further evidence," he went on more stiffly than before, "of the lax an' care-

less administration o' the affairs o' that thar ship. In that boat's breakers they wan't on'y a handful o' wormy bread, an' a pint o' rusty water in the bottom o' the dried-out keg. When I'd e't an' drunk as much as I dast, I tarned to, an' p'inted her head up into the wind, an' undertook to study the set o' the current. Fust I made it out she was driftin' one way, an' next I was sure she was driftin' t'other. So at last I give it up an' resorted to the arbitrament o' chance."

"Gosh!" said Cocky, "what's that? One o' them newfangled sextants?"

"I spat on the back o' my hand," continued Abner, as if Cocky had not spoken, "an' obsarved which way the spit flied when I smacked it with my fist. I laid down a course to that p'int o' the compass, an' here I be!"

Cocky nodded solemnly.

"Many's the course I've laid down that same way," said he, "an' goll durn me if I ever see the time when it didn't bring me through alive."

The picking up of Abner Kimball was the one break in that voyage southward. Though I would have stoutly denied it at the time, I had become satiated with the joys of sea life long before we sighted his whaleboat, and was eager to welcome the new interest his coming brought into the sameness of our days. From the time he learned my name and condition he rather courted my society in preference to Cocky's or to that of any other of the crew. For all that, there was in his attitude no whit of

adulation of the wealth or social position into which I was born; on the contrary, this whimsical old man was one of the most consistent and ardent democrats I have ever met. The one bond of sympathy between us was education: that was the one human acquirement that he reverenced; and that largely, I believe, because he considered himself educated above the average of his associates and trade-fellows. What attracted him to me was not so much my little stock of knowledge as my ready appreciation of his. To Cocky his attitude was a strange mingling of the sailor's instinctive respect for an officer with friendly contempt for an intellectual inferior.

"Oh, yes," he would say, "George is a navigator — a good navigator o' the rule-o'-thumb variety; but what does he know o' higher mathematics? Do you suppose he can use the rule o' three, or algebry, or Euclid, or geometry? No, sir! He takes his observations an' he figgers out his position jest the way he's be'n larned; but he don't know the why of it no more 'n a babby."

"Are you a navigator, Mr. Kimball?" I asked him once.

"Ef I was to tarn my mind to it," said he, "I could navigate a vessel with the best o' them, because I have all the requisite knowledge; an' I wouldn't need no chronometer, nuther. But Mr. Slocum, sir, I've got a higher calling than that."

And with that, in a sonorous voice and a declamatory manner he broke into a long recitation. It was all about Solomon and the Temple, and of the glory

and honor of its builders. It sounded like a passage from the Scriptures, but he would not have it so.

"No, sir," he said, " 'tain't no quotation from the Bible nor from any written book. It's a good sight ancienter than the Bible, boy. Them words has been handed down by the livin' tongues of men through nigh a thousand generations!"

Although this mystified me at the time, I understood later that it was a part of the liturgy of some order of Masons or Odd Fellows to which he belonged. He saw that I was impressed by the solemn, rolling periods and the dignity of his posture and gestures, and for this reason he often introduced one or another of these selections, whether relevant or not, into the current of his discourse.

In spite of one or two quaint superstitions, which he observed inconsistently and obstinately, he classed all forms of religion as mere collections of myths and gross superstitions, in which only the ignorant had any real faith. He was himself an avowed — nay, a proclaimed — atheist, denying both the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. And yet his profanity, when angered, was so sincere and earnest, it was uttered with such a devout dignity, that it had the quality rather of the denunciatory prayer of an old Hebrew prophet than of the curse of a blasphemer.

True to his democratic principles, he mingled freely with the crew, meeting their shy and sullen distrust with a frank and smiling face and friendly outstretched hand. He knew a few words of their

tongue, and would sit talking with them for hours, eking out his scanty vocabulary with signs and gestures, in the use of which he was extraordinarily proficient. Cocky and I were disposed to censure him for such friendly traffic with these men whom we knew to be thieving, murderous scoundrels, whose knives might at any moment be turned against our own throats. And yet, as the event proved, it was his friendliness for them, rather than our aloofness, that was in the end the means of saving the ship.

It has often since occurred to me that this professed infidel was after all in the actual conduct of his life the best Christian of us all. Upon one occasion when Cocky had ventured to remonstrate with him for his intimacy with the crew, he rejoined: —

"An' why, Cap'n Ellwood, should I not be friendly with 'em?"

"Why?" said Cocky, "becuz they're a foul lot o' thieving, murdering pirates. They'd slip a knife betwixt my ribs, or yourn either, if ye stood out agin 'em."

Abner smiled a little scornfully.

"They was once a man — though better folks than you an' me, Cap'n, would give him a higher name — that was rebuked fur settin' with publicans an' sinners an' breakin' bread with 'em. He had an answer for them that rebuked him; an' it wouldn't do ye no harm, George, to make yerself a mite better acquainted with it."

This was but so much Greek to poor Cocky, who stood for a moment gaping foolishly at his friend.

Then, catching a twinkle in the man's eye, he grinned sheepishly, and said: "Ef you don't beat all, Abner Kimball! A man never kin tell whether ye're in arnest or a-foolin'."

I too came in for my share of his whimsical reproof. It was, I believe, upon an occasion when I was expressing my distrust and dislike of the Portuguese crew.

"They're a pack of lying Catholics!" said I, in a heat.

"An' ye're a Quaker," snapped the old man, "clean an' truthful, becuz ye was raised that way. Boy, we're all what the sarcumstances of birth an' environment has made us, on'y some on us larns to know better. Them Portugees believe what was taught 'em, same's you an' me believe the multiplication table. We all have our faults an' failin's; but don't ye ever let me hear ye blame a man fur his religion."

"But they're wicked men," I insisted. "They're pirates, Mr. Kimball! They've stolen this ship from my father!"

"Aye! Thar's whar the dog bit ye, eh? William, did ye ever hear the Quaker's prayer?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"It goes this way," said he; and he clapped his two palms together under his chin, and turned his eyes upward with a sanctimonious grimace on his face. "God, bless me an' my wife, my son John an' his wife: us four, an' no more."

The shaft went home, and rankled in my heart for many a day; for, boy though I was, I realized that

we New England Quakers, for all that we go about clothed in the garments of meekness and humility, and have ever the word "Friend" on our lips, are yet in our hearts an exclusive and self-complacent people, far too much disposed to stand apart like the Pharisee of old, and thank God that we are not as other men are.

XIII

THE OLD BRIG ONCE MORE

WITHIN the week that followed Abner Kimball's rescue, an extra lookout was placed night and day in the foretop. In this Cocky had no hand, being, indeed, quite contemptuous of the sort of navigation that required any such help.

"It's right enough aboard a whaler," said he, "when ye're a-cruisin' to ketch an animile that's cruisin' hisself. But when ye've on'y got to pick up a p'int o' land that's standin' still, an' sot down acc'rate on yer chart, an' stan's out bold an' cl'ar a matter o' twenty mile away, I'd be a lubber if I couldn't bring up alongside with my eyes shet."

Thereupon Abner interposed various objections and difficulties, calculated rather to display his own knowledge of navigation and mathematics than to pick flaws in Cocky's nautical practice; and it was not as a consequence of Abner's fine-spun theories, but only because Juan Pedro and Miguel Maria insisted upon it, that Cocky reluctantly consented to send a man with a good glass to the masthead.

Toward nightfall, three or four days later, Cocky said to me, "Waal, Bill, we'll be thar tomorrer mornin' afore dawn."

"Where will we be, Cocky?" I asked.

"Whar we're bound fur. Hain't got no name that

I ever heerd, bein' no more'n one of a group o' rocks that lays off yonder. They're on the chart, but no one ever goes nigh 'em, becuz they're blame ontrustworthy neighbors fur sailor-men."

This information got me up early the next morning, but only to find at the first glimmer of dawn that the ship was shrouded in impenetrable mist. She floated motionless on the water, her jibs and topsails flapping lazily with the roll and heave of the swell. When he saw me on deck, Cocky joined me.

"Mornin', Bill," he said. "What did I tell ye?"

"Are we there?" I asked. "I don't see anything."

"O' course ye don't see nothin' — not through this fog. But it's thar, all the same, not more'n three or four mile to wind'ard."

"How do you know it's there, Cocky?"

"It's boun' to be," insisted the little man, "onless a volcano come along an' blowed it out o' the sea. Hain't I laid my course fur it straight as a string?"

"Cap'n Ellwood," said Abner, who had joined us as we stood talking, "I cal'late ye done a plumb foolish thing — I might even go so fur as to call it a durned foolhardy eskypade. 'Stid o' displayin' sound jedgment an' prudent regard fur the safety of yer ship an' passengers, an' givin' them rocks ye was headin' fur a wide berth, ye've shaved it close as ye kin, an' in a thick fog at that."

"They ain't nothin' foolish nor foolhardy about it, Abner — not to a certificated navigator, they ain't."

"It ain't within the boun's o' navigation nor yet

o' mathematics to do sech a thing — not as close as three or four mile. They's too many variable an' too many unknown quantities."

"Abner," said Cocky, solemnly, "kin ye saw off a two-inch plank squar' an' true?"

"Squar' an' true, George, to the breadth of a hair, an' without pencil, rule, nor squar', nuther."

"Yes, Abner, I 'low ye kin; ye've got skill in yer trade. An' I've got skill in mine. I kin sail a vessel jest like ye saw a plank, squar' an' true to the breadth of a hair, an' without no vari'bles nor unknown quantities, nuther."

Then, without giving the old carpenter a chance to reply, he grasped me by the shoulders. "Look thar, boy! Thar comes the sun."

I looked east, west, south, and north in turn, yet could see no sign of it. But a light breeze was fanning my cheek, and upon looking once more to the eastward, I saw the mist gathered into swirling, writhing streamers, drifting over the brightening sea to a low fog-bank that still shrouded the southern horizon. In another instant the sun shot up out of the sea, a blazing golden ball; the breeze freshened; and as if by magic the mist vanished. The clear blue vault of the heavens arched the crisply sparkling sea. And there, bold and sharp, not three miles off our port bow, a great bulk of rock, gilded by the rising sun, rose sheer a hundred feet from the spume of the breakers that surged about its base.

For a moment we stood speechless. Then Abner grunted.

"Cap'n Ellwood," said he, "ye done good."

"No better'n ye could do, Abner, *with a saw.*"

By this time all hands were on deck, gathered into knots of pleased and excited men that hung over the port bulwarks, chattering, laughing, and pointing toward the rock. We watched them, amused by their childish demonstrations of delight, and then the three of us went below for breakfast.

"Goin' to drop anchor?" Abner asked, as Tony set the coffee before us.

Cocky shook his head.

"Too deep," said he. "They ain't no soundin's till ye git clost up alongside the clift, 'cept to the south an' so'west, whar a ledge o' rocks makes out a mile or more. I aim to lay her to, mebbe as clost in as we be now, mebbe not so clost: depen's on the weather. I cal'late the Portugees 'll go ashore in the boats an' fetch off what they want."

"Kin they make a landin'?"

"I 'low they kin; they prob'ly know what they're about."

On our return to the deck we found that Cocky was right. Juan Pedro and Miguel Maria were superintending the crew in the work of getting the boats over the side. In all there were five boats: the dory which Cocky had used to go to and from the ship when she swung at her moorings in the Pool; the skiff in which I had come aboard; the whaleboat which the Portuguese had stolen from Captain Robbins; another whaleboat they had got in the Azores; and finally a third, in which Abner had been picked

up. It was these three whaleboats they were now getting into the water.

As soon as the two Portuguese leaders laid their eyes on us, they came aft and, taking Cocky aside, talked earnestly with him.

"We three are to man the boats," he said, when he rejoined us. "They're too short-handed to leave men enough aboard the ship to guard us, an' I won't agree fur us to be tied up while they're gone, so the on'y safe thing fur 'em to do is to leave Tony and the helmsman aboard, an' take us along in the boats. That'll give 'em seven men to each boat, six to row, an' one to steer. Not a man too many, nuther."

So we swarmed down the falls into the waiting boats. I stuck close to Cocky, but Abner deliberately went into another boat. Somewhat to my surprise and greatly to my satisfaction, they gave me an oar. I was proud of my skill at rowing, and in spite of the weight and length of the sweep, believed I could hold my own with the rest of the crew. Cocky was steersman, and had orders to follow close in the wake of the other two boats, which were commanded, the one by Miguel Maria, the other by Juan Pedro.

The leading boat pulled straight for a break in the line of surf off the southern end of the rock. As we drew nearer, this line seemed to open out, showing channels of smoother water between the ledges upon which the rollers were breaking. Through one of these channels the three boats threaded their way, the thunder of the breaking surges filling our ears, and

the salt spray from their crests wetting us all like rain. This for a moment; then we shot through into a pool of quiet water, sheltered by a semicircle of surf-washed ledges, and to the northeast by the towering crags of the rock itself. As we came full upon this aspect, a sight met my eyes that quite overpowered me with astonishment. There in stark reality lay the scene of the wreck of the slave ship, as Cocky had described it: the sheer, beetling cliff, rent from summit to sea level, and in the cleft a dirty old brig, listed slightly to port, her decks a tangle of canvas and cordage, and her masts reaching scarce halfway to the top of the overhanging crags.

"Cocky!" I said, in an awed whisper, "it's the old slaver!"

"Shet up!" he said sharply, and nodded meaningly towards the Portuguese on the thwart behind me.

Then all at once my heart sank like a plummet. Cocky's miserable, scheming treachery seemed plain before me, like a picture. The little man had from the first played the part of a spy for his shipmates of the slaver; had probably been in communication with them from the time he came to our shipyards. The stealing of the Wanderer was probably of his own planning; his anxiety for her safety, his imprisonment in the hold, his reluctance to act as navigator for the Portuguese, yes, even his earnest concern for my life — all were feigned in order that his own neck might be safe in the event of their capture. And it was Cocky, the weazened little man that sat facing

me there with grim set lips, Cocky, who I would have sworn was my devoted friend — he it was who had done this!

By this time the first two boats had drawn in under the stern of the vessel, and Juan Pedro and Miguel Maria were swarming aboard by the tangle of cordage that hung there. While they were exploring the deck and cabin, we rested on our oars some ten fathoms away. After some time Miguel Maria came on deck, looking, I thought, as black as any thundercloud. He shouted a command that brought the crew of one of the waiting boats to the deck at his side. Then came a second command clear across the water to us:

"Agarrai vos o capitaozinho!" (Seize the captain.)

The crew of our boat rose as one man and swarmed over the thwarts toward the stern. I had a momentary glimpse of Cocky, crouching low on the thwart, his teeth clenched and his lips drawn away from them in a horrid grin. Then the rush of men behind me knocked me senseless into the bilge.

When I came to myself I was lying in the bottom of the empty boat, and Abner, leaning over the gunwale, was dashing handfuls of sea water in my face. My first glance about me showed me the three whaleboats, empty save for Abner and myself, moored side by side to the rudder chains of the old brig. From the deck above came an angry murmur like the buzzing of a swarm of bees.

"Where's Cocky?" I asked weakly.

"Sh — sh!" warned Abner cautiously, "speak low.

They got him." His significant toss of the head toward the deck led me to fear the worst for the poor little man.

"Can ye stand?" asked Abner solicitously.

I struggled to my feet, fighting down the dizziness that came over me, and smiled stoutly up into the old man's face. With a grunt of satisfaction he awkwardly but noiselessly rolled his gaunt form over the gunwale of the boat, lowered himself gingerly into the water, and stood there immersed to his shoulders.

"Come!" he whispered.

Without question or hesitation I slipped over the side. The water was too deep for me to stand, and I was too fearful of splashing to swim; so, grasping me by the collar of my shirt, Abner waded cautiously toward the brig, towing me through the water at his side.

"Don't ye try to swim," he muttered. "Ye kin wade purty soon."

When we were well under the overhanging stern he pushed forward, keeping our two bodies close up against the planking of the port side. Before long my feet touched the bottom, and I too began to walk, holding fast to the carpenter's belt as I followed along behind him. In this shallower water the hull stood so high that we could almost pass under her bilge, and her list to port rendered us invisible even to one leaning over the bulwarks above us. The sounds that came down to us from the deck, however, gave evidence of such angry excitement among the

Portuguese that there was obviously little immediate fear of their searching for us. Having reached the bluff bows, we stood ankle-deep in water, and still concealed both from those on deck, and from any who might chance to return to the boat.

"What is going on?" I asked, as soon as I felt we were well out of hearing.

"Nigh as I kin figger it," said Abner, "they failed to diskivver the stuff they aimed to git, whatsoever it is."

"Oh! I see. They can't find it, and they think Cocky has taken it away or hidden it."

"The information I accumulated from sech intelligible langwidge as reached my ears leads me to the presumption that it was suthin' like that. But how did ye git to know it? Ye was out yonder with the cap'n."

"Why, Cocky told me all about this old brig — 'way back home, that was. She was a slaver, he said; and he made several voyages in her. When she ran ashore here, the crew — "

"Hold on now, sonny; no ship never run ashore here. No sirree! She couldn't even 've be'n sailed here. On'y way to git her here was to tow her through them ledges an' kedge her in here with a winch. Cap'n must have be'n yarnin'."

"I only know what he told me. He said the crew murdered their officers, and put off in the boats with as much of the gold as they dared to carry. Cocky was asleep in his berth, and was left behind."

"An' the foxy little cuss went an' carried off the

rest o' the plunder — or mebbe hid it somewhar."

"No, he only took what he thought was due him in wages — at least that's what he said."

Abner smiled and shook his head.

"He's a deep one, is Cap'n George, an' I 'low he ain't above a leetle mite o' prevarication when he seed the needcessity fur it. He's crafty, an' no mistake about it."

"What have they done with him? Killed him?"

"Not yet, they hain't; becuz he knows whar the stuff is, an' they don't. I cal'late they'll torture him a bit fust."

"Torture him! Why, Abner, they must be fiends!"

"No, they ain't. It's on'y jest the way they be'n brought up. They're simple ignorant folks, an' cruel jest like children: comes nat'ral to 'em, an' they ain't never be'n taught no diff'rent."

"Suppose he hasn't taken the gold, or won't tell them where it is hidden; what then?"

"Waal, it wouldn't s'prise me a mite ef they was to truss him up as oncomfortable as they kin, an' go a-huntin' it themselves."

"Won't they be likely to find us too?"

"Mebbe so, an' mebbe not; depends on sarcumstances. The way I figger it out, they'll commence with the ship, an' sarch her from stem to starn. We'll be safe enough right here while they git through with that job. But the next likeliest hidin'-place is in the water alongside. They'll prob'ly git out in the boats an' rig a drag. Ef they work up one side an' then up t'other, an' keep well bunched to-

gether, we may ee-lood 'em. But ef they work both sides to oncet, or scatter amongst them rocks for'ard, we may be kotched."

For a long time we heard nothing but the gentle lapping of the waves along the ship's sides, and the muffled sounds that told of the work that was going on so feverishly within her hold. Then these noises gradually grew less and less, and we began again to hear voices and footsteps on the deck above us. Finally they all went aft — as we presumed, to man the boats. They must have been too intent upon the search to notice our absence, for as we listened anxiously from our hiding-place under the bows, no new note of excitement came to our ears.

"Ye're small an' easy hid," whispered Abner. "Scurry up among them boulders, an' see what's a-goin' on."

Nothing loath, I stepped out of the water, and creeping cautiously from one rock to another, soon reached a position from which I could look back through the narrow tunnel between the bilge of the brig and the side of the cliff. The three boats, I saw, were now full of men, all of whom seemed so busy with what I guessed were the drags or dredges they were rigging astern, that I could have stood out from the shelter of the boulder without the least fear of discovery. Presently, however, they took to the oars and began to row slowly along the narrow lane of water toward the place where Abner was standing. The three boats, strung out in a single file, made but slow progress; for at every second stroke

of the oars one of the drags would catch upon some obstacle, whereupon all the men would stop rowing while those tending the dredge lines jumped into the water and waded back to investigate. It soon became apparent to me that they would before long reach a point where the projecting bilge would impede the further advance of the boats, when they must either take to the water and pull the dredges along themselves, or return to the stern and work up the other side. I therefore left my hiding-place, and more cautiously than I had come, stole back to the spot where Abner was waiting.

"They're coming toward us in the boats, along the port side, with dredges behind each boat," I reported.

"The hull lot o' them?" he asked.

"Yes — eighteen of them."

"All bunched togither in the boats?"

"Either in the boats or in the water close alongside. They must be nearly amidships by this time."

"Then the deck's the place fur us," said Abner.

XIV

COCKY'S LUCK TURNS TWICE

As noiselessly as we could, we waded aft along the starboard side, until just under the fore chains we came upon a single bight of rope dangling from the bulwarks high above our heads. Without a word of explanation Abner lifted me to his shoulder and then pushed me upward until I lay upon the canted planking of the brig's side, with his outstretched hands for a foothold. In this position I found the end of the rope just within my reach. I grasped it and pulled. A fathom or so came away, and then it tightened and held fast as I tested it with my weight. In the next minute I was on deck. Before I had time to see that the rope was securely fastened, Abner seized the end I had pulled loose, swarmed up the side, and was clambering awkwardly over the bulwarks. At first glance the whole stretch of the deck seemed deserted; but a moment later my horrified eyes fell upon the form of a man dangling at the end of a rope near the mainmast. It was unquestionably Cocky's body. It hung with feet just clear of the deck and arms stretched high above his head. I did not for a moment doubt that he was dead, and yet this peculiar position puzzled me. As I turned away from the pitiful sight, I saw Abner had slipped off his shoes and was creeping softly aft. I would have followed

him, but he indicated by a quick gesture that I was to stay behind. It was only two or three minutes before he returned, and without a spoken word led me to the forecastle companion, and down the steep steps to the close and noisome sailors' quarters.

"Is he dead?" I whispered.

"Dead? The cap'n? Not a bit of it! But I cal'late he's be'n the all-firedest oncomfortable seafarin' man on the Atlantic Ocean fur the last half hour."

"Why, I thought they'd hanged him."

"So they had: hanged him by the thumbs. Ef I hadn't eased up that halliard a mite, so's he could git his toes to the deck, he'd 'a' be'n ready to tell 'em twice over all he knows about that treasure, a good long spell afore they got back to him."

"Why didn't you cut him down?"

Abner shook his head.

"No, sir. That would 'a' be'n a durn sight more foolhardy than merciful. Ef they was to come back an' find him gone, they'd be arter us like a swarm o' hornets 'fore we could get away. But when they find him the way I left him they'll 'low the rope stretched or slipped or suthin'; an' mebbe they won't miss us fur a spell. Thet's our on'y chance."

We lay in that sweltering, foul-smelling hole the greater part of the day, tortured by hunger and thirst, and listening to the voices, now close at hand, and now remote, of the Portuguese as they scoured sea and shore for the missing treasure. At last toward sunset we heard their voices and footfalls on deck, and crawled under the filthy bunks, the better

to conceal ourselves. Wearily the minutes passed, and still the murmur of voices and a stir and bustle came to our ears from the after part of the vessel. After a long time — it seemed hours to me — these sounds ceased, and but for the soft lapping of the incoming tide along her sides, there was silence aboard the brig.

Stiffly we crawled out from our vermin-infested hiding-place, and ventured cautiously on deck. Darkness had already fallen, but the myriads of stars that glowed overhead shed a faint, soft light upon the deck and made it possible to distinguish the outlines of the objects about us. Cocky's body still hung black and motionless under the mainmast. With eyes and ears alert for sight or sound of danger, we picked our way aft until we stood before the hanging figure. His head had dropped forward between his upstretched arms; his face was colorless, his one eye open but dull and expressionless. Like a hot iron in my heart came the thought that this was the man whom I had only that morning wrongfully accused of wicked treachery; and here he hung — I had all but said crucified by the fiends I had called his accomplices. The bitter tears of remorse were in my eyes when I heard Abner, who had taken the lifeless body in his arms, tell me to ease away on the halliard by which it was suspended. That done, he gently laid him flat upon the deck and fell to chafing his stiffened limbs.

"Ef he had a taste of water, now," said Abner, "er rum, fur a ch'ice, he'd come to in a jiffy."

"He's not dead?"

"Not him. He's teak-built, is George — or mebbe whalebone's more like it. Ye can't hurt *him* none. Jump below now, boy, an' see ef ye can't locate a water-breaker or a case bottle somewhar."

A hasty search of the after house, which I found only a trifle less unsavory than the forecastle, and dark as a pocket, was fruitless save for a small flask half full of rum, which I came upon while fumbling about in one of the cabins. Back on deck with this find, I handed it to Abner, and hastened forward to the galley in eager search for a fluid that would better quench my own thirst. The stuffy little hole reeked of soot, spoiled meat, rancid grease, and stale tobacco-smoke. Feeling my way about, my hands went into many a nasty mess: here was a barrel of ship's bread, thick with mould; near it I came upon a hogshead of salt beef, well-nigh putrid; in another corner was a barrel of fermenting molasses with the bung started, and the sticky filthiness oozed out upon the deck round about it.

At length my exploring fingers touched a small keg that lay upon its side beneath a table. Carefully wiping the least soiled hand on my jacket, I held it under the spiggot and let a few drops trickle into it. First I sniffed and then I tasted the fluid: though warm, and stale, and flavored with rotting wood, it was unquestionably water. So I groped further until I found an empty pannikin, which, after a thorough scouring with the corner of my coat, I filled with the precious liquid. This, with

much fortitude, — for my tongue was dry and my throat parched, — I carried aft to poor Cocky.

He was already conscious, and sitting propped against the mast. The first mouthful of water he sucked in eagerly, but at the second he pushed the pannikin away.

"How much is they?" he asked.

"I don't know," said I. "I drew it from a keg in the galley."

"Go easy then, till we know ef they's any more. Tastes mighty like dregs to me."

Accordingly we each took two small mouthfuls.

"No more talkin', now," said Cocky. "Talkin's dry work. All hands stretch out an' take a snooze."

And we did so. In one moment I was sure I could not forget my teasing thirst in sleep; in the next, I was rubbing my eyes and stretching my stiffened limbs in the cool gray of the dawn. The two men stirred beside me and woke as I got to my feet. Together we went to the galley to take stock of our water supply. Carefully we drew off the contents of the keg until there came only a slow dribble of mud. There was altogether barely a quart of it, and very brown and uninviting it would have seemed, had we been a whit less thirsty. As it was, each drank his portion eagerly, and would all but have given his soul for another mouthful.

Our next problem was food. For, as Cocky said, though we might succeed in hiding from the Portuguese, yet hunger and thirst would surely find us out and in the end drive us back to submission. We

first searched the galley, only to find that the small amount of bread and meat there was spoiled by mould, corruption, and vermin. In the after hold, beneath the cabin, where according to Cocky the bulk of the stores were kept, we found three or four casks of beef and pork, one of dried salt-fish, and as many more of ship's bread. All of these had been broached and their contents scattered by the Portuguese in their mad search for the treasure. Some of the meat and fish were notwithstanding in fair condition; but these Cocky would not have us touch because of the salt. Instead, he served out to us some fragments of bread which he pronounced free from mould and weevils.

"Now," he said, after we had each eaten his portion, "to find a safe hidin'-place, afore them devils git back agin. Do ye, boy, climb to the maintop an' keep a lookout fur 'em, while me an' Abner seek out a good place fur to hide."

"Ef I might make a suggestion, Cap'n George," said Abner, "we couldn't sca'cely diskivver a more secure an' suitable place o' concealment than the location ye've see-lected fur that thar treasure."

"The location *I've* selected fur the treasure?" said the little man. "Why, I hain't put the treasure nowhar, on'y the fifty-six dollars and forty-two cents that was rightfully due me in wages; an' that's safe in the Savin's Bank in New Bedford."

"Waal, then," said Abner, "they's somebody else be'n here an' misappropriated it."

"Sartin sure," said Cocky. "I knowed it soon's I

stepped on the deck. Things wan't nowise the way I left 'em."

"Is that so?" queried Abner suspiciously. "Ye ain't foolin', George? Honest, now?"

"Cross my heart, Abner," and Cocky suited the action to the word. "Why, look a' thar," he continued, pointing to the maintop. "Look a' that block lashed to the head o' the main-topmast. Did ye ever see sech a block on the maintop?"

"Turr'ble big block fur the maintop," admitted Abner.

"An' thar's the mate to it on deck, thar, with a bight o' rope rove through it."

"Looks to me," said Abner, "like ye'd rigged a block an' tackle fur to lift suthin' good an' heavy out o' the hold an' swing it over the side."

"No, sir, I'm not sech a lubber as that. Ef I was to go fur to do sech a thing, I'd lash my block to the peak o' the gaff, thar. Waal, Abner, this here talk ain't gittin' us nowhere. Them Portugees'll be down on us afore we know it. Come, Bill, up the shrouds with ye!"

During the voyage southward I had conquered all fear of the dizzy height of a swaying mast, and had learned to scamper up and down the shrouds, and to swarm to the topgallant heads with all the ease of the seasoned hand. So it was but a moment before I was perched aloft there at the masthead, scanning the sea for a sight of the boats. I found there was little advantage to be gained by my exalted position, for the two cliffs still towered above me on either side.

But I noticed that the eastern cliff, falling away somewhat on the seaward side, gave me a glimpse of the southern horizon. It occurred to me that if I could but climb the sheer wall opposite, which was here scarcely more than arm's length away, I might so extend my view as to see our ship itself. As I was scanning the face of the rock in search of a way to climb it, I saw a little below me, and so close that I might almost have jumped down upon it, a shelf of rock wide enough to stand upon without fear of a fall. On the landward side it quickly fell away to nothing, while the other end was blocked by a mass of stone which, split from the face of the cliff, was kept from falling by the support of the ledge itself. Here, I thought, was a safe refuge for us, if we could but win to it. Stretched at full length upon it, or possibly crouched in the cleft between the mass of rock and the face of the cliff, we might all lie securely hidden from the Portuguese, save only in the event of their climbing to the mast tops and looking down upon us.

Full of this idea, I hailed the deck, bringing Cocky and Abner up from below.

"Come aloft!" I cried.

Cocky jumped for the shrouds and was soon just below me on the topmast, but Abner stood staring at me as if stupefied.

"Look there!" said I, pointing to the ledge.

Cocky looked. "Sufferin' Jehoshaphat!" he exclaimed, "ef he ain't at it agin!"

Without another word he grasped a rope that hung

near him, — one of the halliards it must have been, — and still retaining his hold upon it, slid down the topmast. When he was just at the level of the ledge he stopped, and drawing up an arm's length of the rope, deftly knotted a loop in it with his free hand. A hasty glance downward to see that it hung free, a strong tug at it to see that it would hold his weight, and he swung out, with his foot supported in the loop. In the first swing he fell short of the ledge, but a second push against the mast sent him squarely over it, and he stepped off upon it as easily as a man steps off his own doorstep. Then he got hold of the end of the rope, and let the loop swing back to me.

"Come along over, Bill," he called.

Coward that I was, I trembled all over at the thought of that swing; but pride forbade hesitation. And when I had done it and stood safely at Cocky's side I was disgusted to find what a simple matter it was. The ledge was level and wider than I had thought, but deeply encrusted with the excrement of sea birds. We carefully picked our way along until we reached the point where the huge block of stone prevented further advance along the ledge, and then climbed upward into the crevice that separated the boulder from the face of the cliff. Upon passing through this we found ourselves upon a platform, or rather a pulpit, on which five or six men might easily have taken refuge. Under our feet was a floor of mixed gravel and shale; overhead the shelving cliff, arched like a sounding board; in front the sloping face of the great block of stone formed a parapet

that effectually screened us from all eyes but those of the gulls. Every rock surface round about was, like the ledge, thickly encrusted with the offensive guano, and its pungent, penetrating stench polluted the air.

"This here is whar I 'low we'll stay fur a spell," said Cocky, looking about him appreciatively. "Do ye drop down agin, Bill, an' fetch up Abner, an' the water-bottle, an' what bread ye kin find. I'll stick here, an' whilst I'm keepin' a lookout, I'll be doin' some housecleanin'. If it wan't fur the dif'rence in the natur o' the smell, we mought be snug in the ol' brig's fo'castle."

Accordingly I scrambled back to the ledge, and hailing Abner, told him to join us.

"No, sir!" he returned obstinately. "I hain't the build of a monkey, nor never will have."

Vexed at his obstinacy, and fearful that in consequence of it the Portuguese would return before we were all safely hidden, I pulled the end of the rope from the crack in the rock where Cocky had secured it, swung across to the mast, and slid down a backstay to the deck. In as few words as possible I described to the old man the security and comfort of the hiding-place we had stumbled upon.

"Humph!" said he sourly, "I kin see the befoulment o' them gulls plastered all over the cliff, an' the stench of it is noisome in my nostrils even here."

"But we can clean it all away," I urged. "Cocky's doing it now."

"You may break, you may shatter, the vase, if you will,
But the scent of the roses will cling to it still,"

he declaimed in his best oratorical manner. "No," he went on, "I ain't no jumpin'-jack nor no monkey, bein' a carpenter by trade. Pervide me with a ladder an' an honest scaffold, an' I'll ascend 's high's ye like, an' perform any job ye name in a dignified an' workmanlike manner. But I hain't a mite o' use fur masts an' spars an' ropes, nor yet fur squattin' on a dung-heap atop of a rock, like a gull. Besides, whar's yer food an' drink a-comin' from?"

"There's that water we found in the galley; and some of the ship's bread is fit to eat."

"Oh," said he. "An' when that's gone?"

Having no answer to this, I said nothing.

"No, sir!" he said. "I've had quite a sufficiency o' hunger an' thirst fur one spell. I'd ruther stay aboard o' this here brig an' take my chance, any old day."

"But the Portuguese'll come back and catch you."

"Let 'em come. I don't fear them, nor no man." And the old man shook his gray head, and flashed his eyes at me bravely.

"They'll try to make you tell them about us," I persisted, "how Cocky got away, and where we are hiding."

"They'll be no makin'," he said. "I'll tell 'em freely all they wanta know. An' I 'low what they hear nor what they don't hear from me won't do ye no harm, nor Cap'n Ellwood, nuther."

XV

THE TREASURE PROVES ELUSIVE

Convinced of the futility of further argument with the stubborn old man, I gathered together our slender store of provisions and water, a coil of rope, and a few other useful articles, and with the bundle lashed to my back, ascended the mast again and swung across to the ledge. On this occasion I unknotted the loop in the end of the rope, and left it hanging as we had found it in the first place. Casting a last look down upon the deck as I climbed into the crevice, I hung there for a moment trying to discern what Abner was doing. He had apparently collected a few old casks, boxes, and spars, and had lashed them together to form a rude raft. As I looked, he tied the last knot, and began to drag the structure toward the stern. After a great deal of straining and heaving, he managed to lift it to the after rail, and as he held it poised there, I saw wedged in between the coils of rope, Cocky's tarry jacket and my coat and cap. The next instant he toppled it carelessly over the stern into the sea, and stood there filling his pipe as he watched it drift away on the tide.

I swung myself through the crevice, and told Cocky all that had happened. He nodded his head gravely.

"Thet's Abner, all over," said he. " 'Fraid's death to go aloft. Never knew him to touch foot to ratlines once, an' I made more'n one long cruise with him. Most he'd ever do was to drop over the side into a boat, or swarm up agin out of one, and that he hated worse'n p'izen."

"But," said I, "the Portuguese will get him."

"That's puttin' yer starnpost whar yer outwater belongs," said he with a grin. "Abner'll git the Portugees; an' he'll git 'em right, I guess. Ye see how he was a makin' up to 'em back on the Wanderer? Waal, that's jest the way Abner is. Always a kind of a sea lawyer, he was: could make even a Chinyman believe what he said an' unnerstand him too. Not that they was any harm in him, on'y that he wouldn't stand by an' see a sailor abused, which made him a onpopular carpenter with some skippers. Don't ye worry, boy. I cal'late Abner kin take keer of himself 'most anywhar."

"But that raft thing he put over the side? He surely wouldn't put to sea in such a crazy craft as that."

"Not Abner — no siree! No, he'd ruther be drownded than take to a raft. No, Bill, he's got some scheme, Abner has; an' that thar raft is part on it."

Cocky had already done much toward clearing our refuge of the malodorous guano that plastered its walls. With a sharp flat stone he had scraped it into the many fissures in the rock, which he then filled in with sand and broken shale from the floor.

In spite of his efforts the pungent odor seemed stronger than ever, and that, together with the increasing heat of the sun, made the place far from comfortable. However, it was better than the forecastle of the brig or the slave quarters in the noisome depths of the after hold.

He showed me how it was possible, by clambering up the sloping surface of the rock that formed the parapet of our stronghold, to get, across the shoulder of the opposite cliff, an occasional glimpse of the Wanderer in the offing. The water close at hand, as well as the brig, was concealed by the projection of the outer face of the rock. Over our heads and a little to the left were the maintop and royals of the brig, near enough, it seemed, to be reached by a flying leap.

I had kept a close watch upon the Wanderer and the sea about her for above an hour before I saw a boat put off from her, and creep in toward the reefs. When it had traversed half the distance the jutting rocks shut it off from our view, and we lay there listening for the first sound of oars. Presently between the shrieks of the circling gulls the click-clock of the strokes came to us, at first faint and distant, but gradually growing louder and nearer, until just beneath us they ceased entirely. Then came the sound of voices, the high-pitched, excited tones of the Portuguese and infrequently and briefly a bass rumble from Abner. This continued for perhaps a half-hour, and from then on we heard only vague noises made by men moving about in the brig.

There we lay, sweltering in the torrid heat of the sun, scarcely daring to move, and waiting impatiently for the welcome sound of the departing boats.

They must have stayed long enough to make another thorough search of the ship, for the sun had passed the meridian, and the shadow of the cliff had enveloped us, before the click-clock of their oars again came to our ears. By that time, almost worn out by heat and thirst and cramped in every muscle by our long, motionless vigil, we lay gasping in the incline of the parapet, and longed for a breeze to stir the breathless heat. The refreshing effects of food and drink were denied us, for our water was almost gone, and our parched throats refused to swallow the dry crumbs of bread that were our only food.

When we had seen the boat creep back to the Wanderer and melt into her hull, Cocky sent me out on the ledge to make sure that there was no sign of life on board the brig, for he feared that they might have left a guard upon her. Satisfied by my report, he took up the coil of rope I had brought up with me. Every strand in every fathom of it he carefully examined and tested. Then he measured its length. Finally he threw one end over the parapet, paying it out coil by coil, until it had all run out. The end he held he knotted, and made fast in a crevice of the rock.

"She'll need a scrap o' canvas here an' thar whar she chafes agin the rock," he said, carefully testing the fastening, "but I cal'late we'll have to risk it this time without."

He sprang upon the parapet, and grasping the rope, walked down the steep outer slope, then, slipping over its edge, disappeared from my sight. Anxiously I watched the taut rope as it strained and quivered with the quick movements of his descent. Then at last it slackened, and Cocky's "Right-o!" floated up from below. After assuring myself that no strand of the rope had been cut where it chafed against the rock, I sat down to await his return. Before many minutes had passed the rope became taut again, and I knew from its twitching that he was on his way up. As his head and shoulders appeared above the parapet, I drew a deep breath of relief. Then I looked at him in amazement. Truly he must have possessed the strength and agility of an ape to swarm up that rope with the weight he carried! Bound to his back was a large square of sailcloth, an old flintlock gun, and a bundle of wood, the fragments of casks and boxes. His pockets too were stuffed with a strange assortment: a coil of twine, three or four fishhooks stuck in a cork, a flask of powder, a handful of leaden slugs, and, worst of all, a large chunk of salt beef well advanced in decay.

"And what are you going to do with all this?" I asked, as he was unloading his treasure.

"Goin' a-huntin' fur our supper," he said briefly.

"To shoot some gulls with that gun?"

"No, sir, I'm not. Ef I was to shoot that thar gun, ye could hear it fifteen mile, an' see the smoke, too. Ye can't eat gulls, nuther."

Without another word of explanation he began to

busy himself with hooks, twine, and case knife. I was about to venture another question as to his purpose, when I caught in one of his quick, birdlike glances in my direction, a bright twinkle of his eye, and the curious twisted grin on his face, and kept silent. He cut off three or four ten-foot lengths of the twine, fastening a hook at one end of each. Then he baited the hooks with the rank, foul-smelling beef, and threw them well out on the further slope of the parapet. Two of the lines he gave me, and he held the others himself.

Sitting there well back under the cliff, we soon noticed that the circling gulls were gradually drawing in closer to the parapet; and the next moment one of them made a swift dart at a piece of beef. Swift as he was, Cocky was ready for him, driving him off with a flourish of a stick.

"What did you do that for?" I asked. "He was going to take the hook."

"We ain't a-goin' to eat gull's meat — not yet awhile," muttered Cocky.

I watched him repeat the same manœuvre again and again, until at last the stick failed to snap out to meet a marauder.

"Pull, youngster, pull!" he shrieked wildly.

But it was too late. Taken by surprise at the sudden change in his tactics, my hold on the lines had relaxed, and the bird flew screaming away, the baited hook in his beak, and the line streaming behind him.

"Ding it all," said Cocky, querulously, "couldn't ye see it was a rock pigeon?"

I had to confess that I had failed to note any difference in the birds.

Cocky himself made the next failure, twitching the line too eagerly, and pulling the bait out of the bird's beak. After that he generously entrusted one of his lines to me. But despite the fact that I could now pick out the rock pigeons from the hosts of gulls, and that I held two of the three lines, it was he who hooked the first one, and he twisted its neck with a grin of satisfaction. He then gave me the bird to skin, while he set about kindling one of the smallest, neatest fires I have ever seen. Having made a little heap of shavings and dry chips, he ignited it by means of a pinch of powder and a flash from the old flintlock. The fire was almost smokeless, and had fallen, by the time I had dressed the bird, into a glowing heap of embers. Over these he deftly toasted the pink flesh.

"Tain't stylish to hev' it done brown," he said, as he pulled off a leg and handed it to me. "Not ef ye ain't got no champagne fur to wash it down with."

After the dry ship's bread, the juicy meat was delicious, in spite of its toughness and fishy flavor. We finished the carcase in two minutes and heartily wished for more.

As we lay there dozing through the late afternoon, our thoughts turning naturally to the water which we lacked, there suddenly came into my mind a bit of half-forgotten knowledge that set me scheming to carry out a plan it had suggested. Towards sunset Cocky roused himself and fell to busying himself

with canvas and twine, making, as I soon discovered, a stout sheath to protect the rope where it chafed against the angles of the parapet.

For a while I watched him in silence; then I said:—

"If I should slide down that rope to the brig, Cocky, do you think you could haul me up again?"

"I could, Bill, an' two more like ye. But what's the need o' that? Ye can swarm up a rope with the best of us."

"Yes," said I, "if the lower end is made fast like a stay, but not on a loose dangling rope."

"Ye should larn it, Bill, ye should larn it. It's a handy trick. But what do ye want on the brig?"

"I have an idea for getting drinking-water."

Cocky shook his head gloomily.

"Ye're a great boy fur idees," he said. "But they's not a drop o' water to be found below thar, onless ye kin make fresh water out o' salt."

"That's just what I intend to do."

The little man's jaw dropped, and his one sharp eye bored into my face like a gimlet.

"I cal'late he's gone cl'ar out of his head with the thirst," he muttered. "Come now, Bill, go to sleep, lad. It looks like a storm o' rain, an' I'll rig the sail to ketch some when it falls."

Too weary and thirsty to argue with him, I curled myself up in the least uncomfortable spot I could find, and feigned sleep until the brief twilight of the tropics had deepened into night. Then I rose and, after stretching my stiffened limbs, tossed the end of

the rope over the parapet. Cocky was stirring uneasily in his corner.

"I'm going now," I said to him. "When I pull the rope, draw it up carefully."

"Don't ye be foolish, Master Slocum, don't ye," he begged. "They ain't no water thar. An' fur the love of God don't ye go fur to drink sea water. It's p'izen, and'll set ye ravin' crazy."

"I won't, Cocky, I promise you. I only want you to haul up some things we need."

"I'll do that, son, and cheerful, ef ye'll on'y have sense."

As he was speaking, I crept over the parapet and swung myself down into the blackness. Down and down I went, until it seemed as if I had measured three or four times the length of the rope. Then at last I sensed rather than saw the bulwarks of the brig at my right hand and, reaching out, grasped the rail firmly. The next moment I was on deck, feeling my way forward toward the galley. Though it was as dark as a pocket in there, I knew pretty well from my previous visits where to find what I wanted. Having secured a kettle and a couple of pannikins, I made my way back again to the place where the rope hung. My next task was to fill a bucket with clear sea-water over the stern. All these things I made fast to the dangling rope, and gave the signal to haul up. Smoothly and steadily they went up. The pannikins and kettle, clashing together, occasionally made a jingle and clatter that in the silence of the night seemed tremendous. My alarm at this

noise was turned to terror by a long low whistle that sounded from under the brig's quarter. I stood motionless, frozen into silence, my heart thumping and my skin prickling all over my body. Then, to my infinite relief: "George! Cap'n Ellwood!" The whispered words came up to me in a voice that was unmistakable.

"Oh, Mr. Kimball," I said faintly, "you frightened me awfully."

"Clean conscience fears nothin' nor nobody, young man. Whar's the cap'n?"

"He's above."

"Waal, here's a flask o' water, all I could git away with. An' say, boy, do ye know what them Portugees means by *'Kare-may-muss'?"*

"No. I don't."

"Ye don't, hey? Waal, I cal'late he'll know it. 'Kare-may-muss'; say it over to me, so's ye'll be sure to git it right."

" 'Kare-may-muss.' "

"That's right. Remember it, now, an' say it to George exactly the way I said it to ye. It's suthin' they're a-goin' to do to the brig to-morrer. I heerd 'em talkin' it over when they all got to drinkin' in the cabin to-night. An' when they was all good an' drunk, I jest dropped into the skiff an' rowed back here to tell the cap'n. Thought he'd oughter know."

"I'll tell him," said I. "You're going to stay with us now, aren't you, Mr. Kimball, and not go back to those drunken Portuguese?"

"No, sir, I got to go back to 'em. It's all right

enough fur ye an' the cap'n up on that thar cliff, but it ain't no place fur me. I aim to stay whar I be, along with them Portugees. They think I'm their friend, poor benighted children o' Natur'! An' by the Etarnal God, that's what I cal'late I be!"

Without another word he pushed off his skiff and began to row. Then, when he had taken a dozen strokes or more, he stopped and called back to me:

"Kare-may-muss."

"Kare-may-muss," I echoed him, and he fell to rowing again.

XVI

BETWEEN CLIFFS AND FIRE

"WHAT in blazes kep' ye, boy? Ye had me plumb scairt to death."

It was with these words that Cocky greeted me as he hauled me up over the parapet.

"It was Abner," I said, presenting the welcome flask of water.

"He's a thoughtful cuss, is Abner," said Cocky, after a very temperate swig at the flask. "How did he come to git away?"

"They were all drunk, and he came off in the skiff. He heard them talking of something they were going to do to the brig, and thought you ought to know about it. But he doesn't know what the word means, and neither do I."

"What word's that?"

"Kare-may-muss."

" 'Kare-may-muss'? That's not Portugee. What in tarnation can it be? Suthin' they're a-goin' to do to the brig, he said?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I dunno's I — sufferin' Jehoshaphat! D'ye s'pose he means *'Queimemos'?"*

"That does sound something like it. What does it mean?"

"Means, 'let's burn.' Goll dast 'em — they're a-goin' to burn the ol' brig!"

"Well," I said coolly, "the rotten old hulk does us no good."

"No, nor no harm, nuther. But when they come to burn it, we'll be smoked out, like ye'd smoke a skunk out of a holler tree. We'll have no more chance here than a swaller's nest in a chimbly, come wintertime."

"Perhaps Abner made a mistake about the word," I suggested.

Cocky thought a moment.

"By gum!" he said, "ye're the beatenest boy fur idees that ever I see. It mought 'a' be'n '*Querenemos*' they said. They got a awful sloppy way o' gabblin' their lingo anyhow."

"And what does 'Querenemos' mean?"

"It means careen. Mebbe they 'low they'll find the treasure if they topple her over on t'other side. Ef that's their idee, they kin careen the ol' brig from mornin' to night, fur all we care. What's that ye're a-doin' with the kittle, boy?"

I had set the kettle upon two blocks of stone, had filled it with salt water, and was building a chip fire under it, exactly as I had seen Cocky do it.

"I'm going to distill some water," said I.

"Distill water? An' what sort o' sperrits do ye cal'late ye'll git out of it? Don't ye know that distillin' makes a thing stronger? If ye distill cider, ye git applejack, an' in Jamaiky thay distill molasses an' git rum. But what in time ye'll git by distillin' sea water — onless it's saltpeter or mebbe brimstone — I'll be cussed if I kin tell ye."

"Well," said I, "if you'll light this fire for me, I'll soon show you."

"Hold on now, boy," said Cocky, "if ye aim to have a fire, we got to shet in the light somehow. Smallest kind of a fire on a clift like this here kin be seed a powerful ways off of a cl'ar night."

Working together with rope and canvas, we managed to erect a rude screen so as effectually to cut off the smallest ray of light from the seaward face of the rock. That done to his satisfaction, Cocky lighted the fire and, squatting near, watched my operations with a skeptical grin on his face. When the kettle began to boil, I carefully filled the larger of the two pannikins with sea water, and held it so that the jet of steam from the spout of the kettle would play upon its bottom and sides. To my delight the metal surface soon became studded with drops of fluid. Then as I tilted the pannikin, these drops began to run downward toward the lower edge, from which they dripped off to the ground. I waited until the surface of the pannikin had been washed reasonably clean, and then began to collect the dripping water in the smaller pannikin. With this crude device scarcely more than a tenth part of the vapor could have been condensed, but for all that the drops tinkled steadily into the pannikin at the rate of perhaps thirty or forty to the minute.

After I had collected about a gill, I stopped to rest my cramped arms, and offered the pannikin to Cocky.

"Taste it," I said with some natural pride.

"Not me, Bill. I know better."

So before he could remonstrate, I had the vessel at my own lips. The liquid was warm and flat, but free from the slightest suspicion of salt. Indeed I could have swallowed the whole of it with the greatest relish.

"It's sweet and fresh," said I. "Try it."

Very gingerly the little man wet his lips and smacked them tentatively. Then he took a small mouthful, rolled it about in his mouth for a moment, and finally swallowed it. In the dim light of the little fire I could see a comical expression of astonishment steal over his weazened features.

"Master Slocum," he said solemnly, "Master Slocum, ye're — ye're — ye're a — a scorpion, that's what ye are. To make fresh water out o' salt! I wouldn't 'a' believed it could be did, ef I hadn't 'a' seed it did afore my very own eyes, an' tasted it too in my own mouth. Ye're — " But words failed him, and he sat back and stared at me. I hastened to disclaim any credit for my exploit.

"I didn't find out how to do it myself," I said. "I only read of it in a book."

"In a book!" cried Cocky. "An' here I be'n figgerin' all these years they wan't nuthin' in books on'y foolishness, an' mebbe a bit o' religion now an' then. Master Slocum, ef ever we git back to a ship, an' drop anchor off ol' New Bedford town agin, I'll tackle some o' them books, log me fur a lubber ef I don't!"

After that he entered heart and soul into the

business of distilling more of the precious fluid, nursing the fire so as to get the greatest possible amount of steam from our slender stock of fuel, and contriving, by means of the old flintlock, a prop upon which we could hang the pannikin in its proper position. By midnight our fuel was exhausted, but we had over a pint of water to show for it. Cocky at once volunteered to go down for a fresh supply of wood. The first load I hauled up was a barrel well filled with fragments of boxes, benches, and other woodwork. Next came a large copper pot from the galley, filled with sea water. Finally Cocky himself swarmed up with three capstan bars lashed between his shoulders. With these he made a tripod, and suspending the copper pot from it, made a condensing surface which more than doubled the output of our still. Consequently before we fell asleep in the early morning we had about three pints of fresh water.

When I awoke it was broad daylight, though the sun shone redly through a curious haze. There was, too, a pungent odor of wood smoke in the air — an odor which had been so long in my nostrils, because of my work over the fire, that I thought at first I smelled only the reek of it in my clothes and in the sailcloth upon which we lay. Presently, however, I noticed that dense blue and brown clouds of vapor were rising between me and the sun. Then my sleepy senses became aware of a strange snapping and crackling coming from the foot of the cliff, and in that same instant Abner's warning flashed into

my mind. The right word was "queimemos," after all. The Portuguese had already fired the brig.

Cocky, awake at the first touch of my hand, appreciated the situation without a word from me.

"Ah, they done it, the blasted sea-cooks!" he cried. "Tryin' to smoke us out, be they? Crawl out to that crack, Bill, an' see if the boats is stannin' by."

After a deal of squeezing and squirming, I managed to wedge my slim body between the parapet at its seaward end and the face of the cliff, until I had gained a position which commanded the water inside the ledges.

"There they are," I said. "Three of them, about a stone's throw out. There are five or six men in each, and some of them have guns."

Hardly had I spoken when a shot rang out, followed, as I dodged back between the rocks, by a fusillade.

"That thar was Abner, I guess," said Cocky, as I, pale as death, and shaking like a leaf, crawled back to him.

"Abner?" I repeated. "Abner try to shoot me?"

"Wan't nobody tryin' to shoot ye, Bill. All them shots spluttered agin the shoulder o' the clift yonder. I 'low the ol' man must 'a' seed ye an' let fly with his blunderbuss at the rocks on t'other side, so's to int'rest the Portugees in suthin' else. He's got a'mighty sharp eyes, has Abner."

By this time the smoke was rolling up in thick black clouds, and the reek of it in the heated air grew almost intolerable. Overhead the gulls were circling

excitedly, emitting incessantly their piercing screams of distress and alarm. Now and then a sooty flame licked its way up a well-tarred stay; but as yet the bulk of the flame roared far below us. There was a light breeze from the north, but for all that the column of hot air and smoke and cinders rose straight to the top of the cliff, where the wind caught it and carried it gently along to the southward.

"What are we going to do?" I asked, searching the heights of the cliff with desperate eyes. "Can't we climb up higher?"

"An' be picked off like chipmunks on a stun wall? No, *sir!* They's a sort of an eddy makes in here an' cl'ars the air, so it ain't so bad yet. But when the flames an' burnin' embers git up this high, we gotta look out. I 'low the on'y thing we kin do then will be to wet this here canvas in that thar copper o' sea water, an' rig a tent with it."

Accordingly we rolled the canvas in a compact bundle, and submerged it in the pot of sea water which had served us as a condenser the night before. While it was soaking Cocky set the three capstan bars in a row, one end of each resting upon the ground, the other leaning against the face of the cliff, so as to form a framework to support the wet canvas. That done, we crouched well back under the cliff and waited.

Minute by minute the air became more hot and more chokingly pungent. Now the hot cinders began to rush by us, carried swiftly upward by the force of the draft. Once in a while a tongue of flame

rose to the height of the rampart, and the spars and rigging of the mainmast were roaring by us as though we lay in the throat of a gigantic chimney.

"Suthin' blowed up," said Cocky, as we struggled together in the awful heat to unroll the wet canvas and stretch it over the bars. It was killing work while it lasted, the flames licking the rampart scarce an arm's length away, and the hot ashes and burning embers everywhere. But it was soon over, and the space behind the steaming canvas for a time seemed refreshingly cool. Then little by little the water dried out of the fabric, and it became so hot that I could not lay my hand on it. Falling embers had scorched it in several places, and I thought to see it burst into flames at any moment. At this critical juncture, Cocky, having stripped off his shirt, drenched it in the sea water and wound it about his head and face. Then, taking the scant pailful of water that remained, he dashed out of the tent, splashed the water over the smoking canvas, and, his pail empty, crawled in again, gasping. He had quenched the embers and soaked the canvas, thus giving us a few more minutes' respite from inevitable destruction. But his right arm and shoulder were badly scorched, and the last of our stock of sea water was exhausted.

We were now lying flat on our faces, our bodies wedged well in under the shelving face of the cliff; and it was owing to the fact that the intense heat had forced us into this posture that I made a remarkable discovery. In the angle the wall made with the

floor, I found there was a narrow crevice, not over an inch in width; and through this crevice there blew upon my hot cheeks a steady draft of fresh cool air.

"There's cold air coming under the rock," I cried hoarsely to Cocky. "Let's try to dig ourselves in under the ledge."

The next minute we were both hard at work scooping away handfuls of the soft shale, débris, and gravel, loosening stones, and heaping it all up between our bodies and the frail wall of smoking canvas that alone kept us from being roasted. Then all at once the sheltering fabric burst into flames, and a blast of scorching heat seemed to force us down on our faces into the shallow trench we had dug. Desperately clawing at earth and stones, we strove to drag our bodies under the protecting ledge, while the fierce heat beat upon us till our clothes seared the flesh they rested upon. Almost exhausted, I made one last effort before resigning myself to a horrible death, and to my amazement felt the earth yielding beneath me. Slowly we slid downward, Cocky and I, and apparently the whole floor of our refuge — down, down, with a rattling and rumbling of stones and gravel, away from the heat and the glare, into the cool darkness of a subterranean cave.

XVII

"ACT O' SOME PERSON UNKNOWED"

I THINK I must have fainted, for presently upon coming to myself I had the impression of having wakened in the night from a bad dream. All about me was a tempered darkness, and a cool draft of air was blowing over me. Before many minutes, however, I awoke to the smarting ache of my scorched back and limbs, and found myself half-buried in a heap of rubble. Close at hand lay Cocky, sprawled in such an unnatural position that I thought him dead. The groan that came from him when I shook him quickly reassured me on this point, and he sat up fingering his burned shoulder tenderly.

"An earthquake, that's what it war," he croaked; "an' here we be buried in the bowels of the earth."

"Look!" cried I, pointing upward. "There's daylight. I can even see a patch of blue sky."

"So ye kin, boy, so ye kin! I 'low that thar crack is whar we come through. An' lookee here! This here's the place we slid down."

He indicated a sloping bank of gravel and shale, extending up to the aperture through which the scant rays of daylight filtered.

"Come," he said, "I cal'late we kin git out agin the same way we come in."

He began to crawl up the incline. But the loose

gravel gave no hold either to his hands or feet, and he soon slipped down again, bringing with him a small avalanche of sand and pebbles.

" 'Tain't no use," he said. "I'll have to make a ladder out o' myself, an' boost ye up."

So, having stretched himself flat on the bank, he invited me to crawl up over him. When I stood upon his shoulders, my head almost reached the opening; but the soil was so treacherous that I had to use the palms of his outstretched hands before I could climb through.

Rather to my surprise, I found myself in our refuge behind the rampart boulder. Our fall had been a mere matter of eight or nine feet to the floor of a small cave. The sun was by this time, as I could tell by the height of the shadow on the opposite cliff, very low in the west. The fire in the brig had almost burned out, though here and there a meagre column of smoke told of embers still smouldering below. Both masts had disappeared, and our little encampment of the cliffside was a smoking ruin. Sailcloth, rope, and capstan bars had been utterly consumed. The bucket, copper pot, pannikins and kettle were warped and twisted out of all use by the heat, and our hard-won stock of drinking water had either been evaporated or had leaked out through the gaping seams of the vessels. The blunderbuss only, because in our digging we had buried it under the soil, seemed little the worse for its exposure to the destroying flames.

Looking out upon the water between the ledges

and the foot of the rock, I could see none of the boats; but when I thrust head and shoulders through the other crevice, I saw all three of them drawn in close about the charred remnant of the brig. The old hulk had been literally consumed to the water's edge, and among the blackened, half-submerged timbers the Portuguese were busily searching, probing with oars and boat hooks for some trace of the vanished treasure. Waiting only long enough to identify the tall, gray-headed figure of the old carpenter, I made haste to return to Cocky with a report of what I had seen.

He heard me through, I thought, with impatience and scant interest.

"Aye, Bill," he said, "I unnerstan', I unnerstan'. But lookee here! Listen a spell, an' tell me what ye make o' that sound over yonder."

It was only by close attention that I could distinguish, beside the boom of the surf on the ledges and the scream of the gulls circling about the rock, the nearer but fainter sound he referred to. It was a slow, rhythmic drip, drip, drip, that could proceed from nothing but the dropping of a fluid on a solid surface.

"What is it?" I asked. "Water?"

"I dunno," said Cocky. "Sounds suthin' like it anyway."

"Haven't you been to see?"

"Waal," he said in evident embarrassment, "ye see, Bill, 'twar so tarnation dark in thar, I 'lowed I'd wait till ye came back."

This gave me the first inkling of one of the little man's few failings. He was afraid to be alone in the dark. In the open, with a glimmer of light from a star, the binnacle, or the riding-light, he was content; with the company of a mate or the watch on deck, he was bold as a lion. But the pitchy darkness of closed places was intolerable to him. It was for that reason that he had not investigated the dripping sound in the far end of the cave. That, too, would account for the moaning, sobbing misery, the abject terror of the man when I came upon him in the hold of the Wanderer. Doubtless his tales of rough treatment, falls and bruises had been pure fabrications, invented to conceal the childish fear that was his secret shame.

Together we crept cautiously in toward the sound of the dripping water, feeling our way with our hands. The roof of the cave, we found, sloped downward from the crevice through which we had entered, so that when we came to the far corner where the water trickled down from above, the solid rock was scarce three feet above our heads. The water fell from somewhere in the rocks overhead, and lay puddled in a hollow of the floor. It proved cool and sweet, so we drank our fill before continuing our exploration of the cave. This was triangular in shape, some twenty-five feet in length, and at the entrance perhaps twelve or fifteen feet wide. Its height varied from eight feet at the point where we tumbled in, to less than three at the apex, where the water dripped. The same convulsion of nature which

had riven the cliffs asunder had probably also heaped the huge blocks of stone so as to roof over the wedge-shaped space between them that formed the cave. At the apex we found, on a second more careful exploration, a chimney-like crevice through which came the downward draft of cool air we had noticed at the entrance during the fire. The front wall of the cave was formed by the block of stone we called the bulwark. This inclining outward would have left a wide breach in the roof of the cave, had it not, until we dug our way through, been entirely filled with shale and gravel. This heap of stony débris it was that formed the floor of our refuge on the cliff, and it was down the sloping sides of it we had slid, when its edge had given way and let us through.

Hungry, sore and smarting from our burns and bruises, we passed an uneasy night, resting rather than sleeping on the smooth, hard floor of the cave. When morning came, and we had broken our fast upon the cool water from the spring, we both went out to reconnoitre. Nowhere was there a sign either of the Wanderer or of her boats. The vessel might still be out of sight behind the headland of either cliff; but as far as we could see, the waters both close at hand and beyond even to the distant horizon showed no trace of them.

"Waal," drawled Cocky, "I cal'late we've seed the last o' them measly Portugees."

"Do you think they've really gone?"

"Sartin sure, I do. Mebbe they found the treasure in the ashes o' the brig, an' agin, mebbe they didn't.

They cal'late we're either drownded or burnt up. Anyway, they hain't no call to cruise round this country no longer. Like as not they 'low it's got a kind o' onhealthy climate. So they've made sail an' laid a true course fur home."

"But who can they get for a navigator?"

"Blest if I know. They kin work the ship all right, but as fur navigatin' — waal, now, come to think of it, Abner's a navigator, or 'lows he is. I cal'late he'll git 'em somewhar ef ye give him time enough to fool round with them higher mathymatticks. How things 'ud go with 'em in a sudden squall, or a hurricane, I ain't a-sayin'.

"But this here ain't a-gittin' us no dinner," he went on. "Jump below, boy, an' see if ye kin find that thar powderflask."

"Why, I thought it blew up in the fire," said I.

"No, sir, it didn't. I shoved it under the ledge thar, when we was makin' salt-water rum t'other night. I've be'n scairt o' gunpowder anywhar nigh a fire ever sence I sailed with a cook that used a keg of it to set on alongside the galley fire. Second mate had to do the cookin' on the cabin stove the rest o' that v'yage. Blamed ef that cook didn't strip every rag o' canvas off the main yards on his way up. Cal'late ye'll find that flask buried in the rubbish down below. Must 'a' slid down thar along with us. Dig it out while I overhaul this here valable blunderbuss."

When, after a long search in the gravel that covered the floor of the cave, I retrieved the powder-

flask, and scrambled up again to the daylight, Cocky had finished his examination of the old musket.

"She's rusty an' she's foul; but fur's I kin see, she's sound at heart. I cal'late I'll try her anyway. Mebbe she'll bust, an' agin mebbe she wunt. Mought's well be blowed to pieces as starve to death."

So he loaded the old piece with a light charge of powder, with a rag torn from his shirt for wadding, and a handful of pebbles for shot. Thus armed we established ourselves, somewhat precariously to be sure, but well out of sight, on the shelving gravel-bank just within the mouth of the cave. We had a long wait; but at last, as the gulls and other birds that frequented the rock began to circle nearer and nearer to our hiding-place, Cocky, as I thought, let several good opportunities go by; for by this time I was hungry enough to eat any kind of meat that offered. Then eventually, when I had almost come to the conclusion that the little man was actually afraid to pull the trigger, there came a tremendous shock, and in a clatter of stones and gravel we rolled head over heels to the floor of the cave.

"Jump up, Bill," said Cocky, who was vigorously spitting sand out of his mouth. "Jump up an' git the critter. I know I hit him."

And so he had. A rock pigeon lay upon the parapet, its head and part of one wing torn off by the shot.

"You skin it," said I, tossing the carcase to Cocky, "while I build the fire."

"Fire?" said he. "What ye goin' to make a fire of? They ain't no more wood."

"Yes, there is. This gravel is full of it. Driftwood, I suppose. I came across several pieces while I was searching for the powderflask."

"Ye did!" cried Cocky, staring at me with a comical expression of bewilderment on his face. "An' how in tarnation blazes could driftwood drift way up here?"

"I'm sure I don't know. But it's here; and I'm not going to eat raw pigeon when I can build a fire and roast it."

So I burrowed into the gravel-heap, and had soon gathered an armful of dry sticks. With them I carefully laid a small fire, kindling it as before by the flash of a priming of powder in the old flintlock. The draft from the far end of the cave carried the smoke away from us and out through the entrance hole, leaving the air inside clear and pure.

Delicious though the juicy roast meat was to us then after our long fast, it grew steadily less so as day after day passed with no change in our diet. And long before that change came, roast pigeon seemed an utterly disgusting and nauseating article of food.

One day we found two of our fishhooks in the gravel. A search of our pockets produced several fathoms of line; and with these materials Cocky soon supplied himself with a serviceable fishing outfit. With a small stone for a sinker, and a bit of pigeon or gull meat for bait, he dropped his line over the

parapet and found, much to his satisfaction, that it reached the water at the base of the cliff. After a few days his skill became so great that we could count upon a daily meal of fish whenever we desired it. But finally his hooks one after the other were caught under the rocks and lost, which ended both Cocky's pastime, and the very welcome addition to our regimen.

Upon one occasion he pointed out to me a ledge of rock some twenty feet above our heads.

"Lookee thar, Bill," he said, "they's some pigeons nestin' aloft thar. Ef ye kin climb that fur, we mought have some eggs fur a change."

It looked a perilous undertaking without ladder or rope; but after studying the cliff well, I decided to make the attempt. Therefore on a bright, crisp day, after a shower of rain, when an unusually cool breeze and the grateful afternoon shade tempted me to the exertion, I started up the cliff. Cocky, his fishline in his hand, lay stretched on the parapet ready to caution and advise me in my progress upward. It was hard work and dangerous, clinging to the face of the cliff, like a fly upon a wall, and feeling desperately for the next handhold or foothold, while the salt sweat blinded my smarting eyes. But working gradually back and forth in a zigzag course, like a vessel, making more leeway than headway against a head wind, I finally reached the ledge. It was scarce as broad as my hand, and yet there were a dozen nests upon it. On two of them sat brooding hens, that stared stupidly at me and showed not the

slightest disposition to fly off. With some little compunction I wrung their necks and tossed them down to Cocky. The eggs — there were about twenty of them — I gathered in my handkerchief, which I carefully tied to the back of my belt.

If the ascent was bad, the descent, I found, was worse a hundred times. Twice I missed my path and found myself in an impasse, from which for a time there seemed no way out. How many times I missed a fall by as little as the breadth of a hair, I never cared to remember. To this day, after having dined a trifle indiscreetly, I live through those minutes on the cliff in a nightmare, from which I wake bathed in a cold sweat. By God's mercy I finally returned to the parapet safe and sound, and with no single egg of the twenty broken. For all the labors performed and perils encountered, however, we had gained but a few mouthfuls of meat that we loathed, and some rank-flavored eggs, the half of them addled.

That evening, as we sat beside the dying embers of the little fire over which we had roasted the eggs and pigeons, Cocky, who for some time had been thoughtfully fingering a fragment of driftwood, suddenly broke the silence.

"Bill," said he solemnly, "do ye ever git to studyin'?"

"Why, I don't know," I replied, rather at a loss as to what he was driving at, "I suppose I do, now and then."

"Uh-huh," he said, nodding his head, "I cal'late ye

do. Ye got ter do a powerful sight o' studyin' to git up them great idees o' yourn. Waal, I be'n a-studyin' an' a-studyin' ever sence we come to this here clift; but 'tain't no use; I can't make nothin' out of it."

"Out of what?"

"Out o' this here," with a comprehensive sweep of his arm over the gravel-heap. "This here sand an' gravel an' pebbles. How'd it all git here? The place fur sand an' gravel is the seashore, ain't it?"

"Or in a sand-pit," I suggested.

"Same thing. Sand-pits was seashore once. Sand-spits run aground, that's what they be mostly."

"And glaciers," said I sagely. "Glaciers break up the rocks into sand and pebbles and boulders, and carry them miles and miles."

"Boy, ye can't tell me nothin' about glazhers. Ain't I seed 'em with my own eyes, hunnerds of 'em, up Norway way, an' in Iceland an' Greenland, an' way off in Alasky. Why, I cal'late I've seed all the glazhers they is. But ye can't make me believe they war ever any of 'em round these parts."

"Well," said I, "maybe not. But perhaps this place where we are sitting was once right on the seashore; and there was an earthquake or a volcano that lifted it way up here."

Cocky nodded slowly three or four times.

"Yawss, that's what I thought fust off. But I tell ye, boy, ef anything like that happened in my time or in yourn, I'd 'a' heerd tell of it. Why, this here rock is as well knowed to all seafarin' men as the

folks to hum knows the meetin'house steeple. It's sighted by mebbe a hunnerd vessels every year. An' no earthquake ain't a-goin' to heave it twenty fathom out o' the sea without some skipper noticin' the difference.

"No, sir, this here stuff was at low-water mark, or nigh it, not two year ago. How do I know it? By this here clam, that's how. I found it yestiddy in the gravel; an' they's more of 'em thar, too. Smell it!"

He thrust the gaping shell under my nose.

"It stinks, boy, it stinks. An' I tell ye, sir, ef that thar clam had be'n out o' the mud an' up here in this dry gravel fur more'n two year, the smell would 'a' be'n clean out of it by this time. An' what's more, the brig below thar was stranded two year last Aperl; an' I was aboard of her six days arter that. Now I kin testify that ef this here rock was ever hove out o' the sea by a earthquake, it must 'a' be'n afore the month of Aperl, eighteen hunnerd and forty-eight."

He fixed his one eye upon me with birdlike solemnity. Then he continued:

"What do it all go fur to prove? says ye. It all goes to prove, says I — an' I'd swar to it jest as soon as not — that all this here rubbish war brought here by the act an' hand o' some person or persons unknowed, an' fur purpose or purposes likewise unknowed, so help me God, amen."

The impressive solemnity of the little man, together with his scarce-repressed excitement, would

under any other circumstances have been ridiculous. But as it was, I was attending rather to the matter than to the manner of his discourse; for he certainly had suggested a reasonable explanation of many things that had puzzled me: the disappearance of the treasure from the brig, the heavy block at the masthead, the changes which Cocky had found in all parts of the brig, and finally, the choking of the mouth of the cave with gravel and débris that must have been dug from the narrow beach under the vessel's bows and hoisted up to the parapet. The inference was plain: some persons — for the task seemed quite beyond the power of one man — had come upon the brig and found her precious freight; they had discovered the cave on the cliff; and they had rigged the tackle to hoist sand and gravel — and surely something more nearly worth all their trouble — and had carefully closed the mouth of the cave so that any chance comer would not suspect its existence. The conclusion was irresistible: in our cave or near it the brig's treasure was surely hidden.

Doubtless Cocky had been following the same train of thought and had come to the same conclusion as had I, for he suddenly sprang to his feet and began burrowing in the gravel-heap for firewood. When he had gathered an armful, he nursed the dying embers back into life, and piling on the wood, soon had a blaze that lighted up every nook and cranny of the cave. Some of the sticks he laid aside; and when I was about to throw one of them on the fire, he checked me.

"No, boy, them is fat pine. We gotta keep them fur torches."

When he had the fire burning to his satisfaction, he kindled one of the sticks in the flame, and having instructed me to carry the others, started off on his reëxamination of the cavern. Inch by inch we went over every portion of the walls and roof, prying into all the cracks, dislodging every loose stone and even sounding the rocky walls for evidence of a hollow space behind it. Cocky, torch in hand, went so far as to attempt to swarm up the chimney where the water dropped down; but he soon got into difficulties, lost his footing, and came tumbling down in a shower of sparks, swearing profusely. Far into the night we prolonged the fruitless search, until at last, singed by the flame of the torches and smeared by their smoke, and ready to drop from very weariness, we gave it up and went to sleep.

The next morning we awoke tired and dispirited. Our stomachs revolted at the thought of roasted pigeon, and it was all we could do to swallow a few mouthfuls of the eggs, washed down by liberal drafts of water. Toward noon Cocky caught a fish. Eager for this change in our diet, I left him to clean it, and slipped down into the cave to kindle a fire. Thanks to our prodigal use of fuel the night before, this proved to be no easy task. Finding only a few splinters near the surface, I determined to burrow deeper into the gravel-heap, and barely two feet in was rewarded by coming upon the corner of a large, solid piece of timber. It was very firmly embedded

in the soil, and even after I had scraped away two or three bushels of sand and stones I failed to budge it. Then Cocky came down with the fish, and we worked together to clear the log. After a few minutes of hard work, Cocky suddenly dropped to his knees and began fumbling in an excited manner around the projecting end.

"Bill," said he hoarsely, "have ye got a stick o' wood?"

"Only a splinter or two," said I.

"Then fur God's sake make a light, an' bring it here!"

I caught so much of the excitement that trembled in his voice, that I could scarce do his bidding. But presently I was holding a small, flickering flame over what we had taken for a log. It was of rough-sawn mahogany, with a deep panel in it; across it was scrawled in black paint an illegible inscription; and round about it was an iron band studded with nails.

"Thar's yer log, Bill!" whispered Cocky.

Stupid fools that we had been! The thought of the treasure had been constantly in our minds; we had discussed it daily; we had become convinced that it lay in or near the cave; we had searched every other possible hiding-place. And now we knew that for days we had been living within arm's length of it; we had slept on it, we had well-nigh died on it. For there it lay, case piled on case, scarcely buried in the heap of gravel, which could have been hoisted to the height for no other purpose than to conceal it.

XVIII

GOOD JAMAIKY—AND DIAMONDS

That fish, I need hardly tell you, was never eaten. Two days later I found the few dried bones the gulls had left on the parapet where Cocky had been cleaning it. Too heavy for them to carry off bodily, they had torn it to pieces between them.

Our amazed stupefaction once passed, there remained to us no more taste for cooking than appetite for eating. Instead we began systematically to uncover the buried treasure. As our only tools were our hands and the old musket, this proved to be slow work. So at my suggestion we began at the top of the pile, sweeping the gravel down into the cave, until some two feet below the surface we came upon the uppermost tier of cases. There were six of them; and wedged in tight between them was a cask covered over with a well-tarred sailcloth. This we first broke out and rolled down into the cave. Then we proceeded to drag the cases, which proved extremely heavy for their size, down the gravel-slope, and ranged them along the rocky wall well within the cave. With the ramrod of the musket we pried off the lid of one of the boxes, not so much from curiosity as for the boards, which we proposed to use in the place of shovels. Its contents were roughly

cast ingots of dull silver, closely packed in regular rows. Then Cocky knocked out the head of the cask, which we had found not nearly so heavy as the much smaller cases. To our great delight it proved to be almost full of clean, sweet ship's bread; and better still, at the very bottom of the cask was a layer of tin cans filled with meats, vegetables, and fruits. Cocky was so sure that the contents of these cans were rotten and poisonous that he would have thrown them unopened into the sea. But I, who once at home had seen similar cans and had tasted the food preserved in them, argued that we should at least try one of them first. So I cut open a can labeled "sweet corn," and finding its contents clean and pure, then and there made a meal of it. Cocky, I am sure, fully expected that I would presently become sick, and die within a few hours.

" 'Tain't right," he said. "Stands to natur' 'tain't right."

And it was only after he saw me in my usual health after a day and a night, that he began reluctantly and fearfully first to taste and later to eat this wholesome and welcome addition to our larder. I verily believe that but for this godsend we should both have sickened and died in the midst of all that useless gold and silver.

When at last we had finished our task, we had thirty-four cases ranged neatly along the wall of the cave. Of the six we opened one contained bar silver, one silver coin, three bar gold, and one gold coin. The coins were mostly Spanish dollars, doubloons

and pistoles; but of the gross value of our find we neither of us had more than the vaguest conception.

"They must be," said Cocky, "most a thousand o' them silver dollars in that box. Ef they're wuth as much as American dollars, that's a thousand dollars a box. The gold boxes is a leetle smaller, but they's a sight heavier. I cal'late they mought be wuth ten times as much, or mebbe more. Now ef ye figger they's as many boxes o' the one as t'other, they's suthin' like — uh — lemme see — seventeen thousand in silver, an' — uh — waal, I dunno's I'd dast tell ye how much in gold, not without pen an' paper."

"One hundred and seventy thousand dollars," said I solemnly. "One hundred and eighty-seven thousand dollars altogether."

"Sufferin' Jehoshaphat! Ye don't mean to say it! Sure ye hain't made no mistake, boy? Carried over too much, or p'inted off wrong? Ye can't be too keerful about p'intin' off, when it's a matter o' cold dollars an' cents."

"Ah, but it isn't a matter of cents, Cocky. There isn't a coin worth less than a dollar in the whole lot. So pointing off doesn't come in at all."

"Thar ye be agin! I tell ye, boy, ye've got a mind that swings true as the compass to the no'th. With all his eddication, Abner can't tech ye."

"But my mind didn't swing to the place where this treasure was hidden," I objected modestly.

"So it didn't, Bill, so it didn't. But I 'low that's on'y becuz ye'd got yer bearin's fouled by the measly grub ye'd had to eat. It's like a hunk o' iron or steel

about a compass, eatin' nothin' but pigeon's meat an' fish; it fouls yer bearin's."

In this Cocky was probably right. At any rate the change from a diet of animal food exclusively to the more natural régime of meat, bread and an occasional tin of vegetables or fruit, very soon changed the whole aspect of life for me. Instead of being dull, heavy and slothful, with an irritable temper and a disposition to despondency, I presently found myself bright, active, cheerful, and confident of an early release from our prison on the cliff.

At about this time there came a change in the weather. Rain fell in torrents for days at a time; then a day or two of sunshine and sweltering heat; and after that more rain again. In consequence we kept far back in the cave where the floor was dry and the air moderately cool. During all this season of bad weather, being cut off from our supply of fresh meat and fish, we lived more and more upon the canned food in the cask, finding it all sweet and wholesome and a welcome change in our diet. In the midst of the tins of food we had come upon two squat stoneware bottles which, as we inferred from the smell, contained rum. Neither of us had as yet tasted the liquor, I because I had no liking for the stuff, and Cocky because he followed the commendable practice of abstaining from intoxicants while at sea.

"It'll come handy," he had said, "in case o' sickness; but I wouldn't tech it under no other sarcumstances, not till we put into a safe port agin."

"But we're ashore now," said I.

Not that I had any desire to persuade him to drink it, but because we never passed by any subject likely to start an interesting conversation or discussion.

"Ashore!" cried Cocky. " 'Tain't what I call bein' ashore. No more'n a seafarin' man that's lashed to the masthead, an' his vessel hard aground. He ain't ashore, is he?"

"We're not lashed here, though."

"Whar's the diff'rence? Mought's well be lashed fast, fur all the chance we got o' gittin' down to sea level. No, sir, not a drop o' rum passes my lips till we're safe ashore — not in the way of enj'yment, that is."

That ended the discussion. For perhaps half an hour we sat there in silence, listening to the dreary sounds of the rain thrashing against the face of the cliff and the surf pounding on the ledges. Then Cocky got upon his feet and took to pacing restlessly to and fro. His path up the cave and back gradually drew closer to the place where the cask stood. Finally he stopped there for a moment, took up one of the bottles and, drawing the cork, sniffed at its contents. Shaking his head resolutely, he put the bottle away again, turned his back sadly upon it, and walked across to where I was sitting.

"Bill," he said, "this here dampness gits right inter my bones."

"Yes," I replied, "it's very bad."

"An' this here sleepin' on hard rock without so

much as a sheet to lay on — it leaves a man stiff an' sore in the mornin'."

"It is hard," I said sympathetically.

"See thar!" he said. "Ef a young boy like ye finds it hard, what must it be fur an ol' feller like me, that ain't nothin' but skin an' bones anyhow?"

He stood there a picture of woe, fingering his skinny thighs solicitously.

"Bill," he said suddenly, "come for'ard to the light an' take a look at my tongue."

I followed him to the mouth of the cave, and stood there in the spray of the spattering rain, while he thrust out a tremendously long tongue, stained brown by tobacco.

"What do ye make of her? Pooty foul, ain't she?"

"Might be better."

"H-m-m, jest what I s'posed. It's the plaguy saltpeter in that canned beef we had yestiddy. Now, in my experience they ain't nothin' that'll cut that saltpeter an' flush it out o' the system but good Jamaiky. Now, Bill, seein' as ye're the on'y medical adviser here present, will I take a dose, or will I leave the darned stuff alone?"

"I think perhaps a dose would do you good."

"Waal, I dunno *as* it will, an' I dunno *but* it will. Howsumever, seein' ye advise it, why, here she goes!"

He put the bottle to his lips, tipped it up and threw back his head. Almost at once I heard a smothered gasp, and the bottle clattered to the floor. It was at once evident from the dark color of his

face and from the way he clutched at his windpipe that the man was choking. So I took to thumping him on the back vigorously, while at the same time he bent over, and thrusting a finger down his throat, was soon gagging and coughing and spitting vehemently. To my great relief the red blood surged back into his face at once, and the paroxysm spent itself. Straightening up, he showed me a small white object which he held between his thumb and forefinger.

"Lookee thar!" he gasped. "What damned lubber put beans in a rum bottle?"

"Why, the bottle was full of them!" said I, stooping over the shattered bottle on the floor. I picked several of the beanlike objects from among the fragments of broken earthenware and carried them to the mouth of the cave for closer examination.

"They're not beans," said I, rolling the round, translucent little bodies about in my palm. "They're pebbles."

"Pebbles?" said Cocky indifferently. "What's the diff'rence? Either one would 'a' choked me to death in another minute."

"But why should pebbles be put in a rum bottle?"

"I give it up, Bill; ef it wan't fur the purpose o' chokin' me to death. Serve me right, too, fur takin' a drink o' liquor while on duty on the high seas. I'd orter knowed better."

"But look, Cocky! Some of them are strange-looking pebbles. See this one."

He took the stone from me and studied it for a

moment. It was yellowish in color, and instead of being round, was roughly faceted. In one of them a facet had been polished, and showed the sparkling transparence of the underlying substance.

"Sufferin' Jehoshaphat!" said Cocky. "Do ye know what it is, Bill?"

"Not a diamond?" I whispered.

"That's it," said he solemnly, "a di'mond."

"And these," said I, "are these all diamonds, and those others on the floor, too?"

Cocky took the stones I was holding in my hand and examined them one by one.

"They ain't more'n two or three of 'em that I'd swar to," said he, "ef it wan't fur the others. But I'll bet a doughnut they're all di'monds — every last mother's son of 'em."

We both went down on our knees to gather up the stones that lay scattered over the floor. We counted two hundred and sixty-nine of them; and in the next few days found five more that had rolled into crevices in the rock and dark corners of the cave. In size they varied from that of a pea to that of a medium large grape.

"What do you suppose they're worth?" I asked.

"Waal, I dunno's I kin tell ye," said Cocky. "I ain't never traded none in di'monds. But from what I've heerd tell from them that has, it ain't easy tellin' what a stun's wuth, not till it's be'n cut an' polished. A stun as big as that, ef it's cl'ar, an' good color, an' ain't be'n cracked, mought fetch as high as ten thousand dollars. Takin' 'em as they run, ye

mought count on as much as four or five hunnerd dollars apiece, mebbe more, an' mebbe less."

"Why, that would be over a hundred thousand dollars."

"Mebbe 'twould. I hain't figgered it out, but I 'low ye're right. I cal'late I must ha' knocked ten or fifteen thousand off the wuth o' the lot, when the stun got kotched in my gullet, an' I chucked the bottle down on the floor. Di'monds is mighty brittle, an' I bet I cracked a dozen of 'em."

"We must be more careful of them after this," said I, "and not keep them in a rum bottle."

"That reminds me," said Cocky, "they was two rum bottles, wan't they?"

"Yes," I replied, crossing the cave to the cask where they had been. "Shall we investigate this one, too?"

"Sartin sure we will. But I 'low we'll be more keerful this trip. Let's have that ol' beef can we emptied last night."

Cocky shook the bottle gently, and then put his nose to the mouth.

"They's some liquor, thar, anyhow, ef thar ain't no di'monds," said he.

Then he carefully poured about half a pint of rum into the beef can, and shook the empty bottle over his palm.

"No use," said he, "they wan't on'y one on 'em loaded. Waal, Bill, I cal'late we kin both b'ar up under the disappointment. Anyhow, we got a couple o' drinks o' good Jamaiky to cheer us up."

He first offered the liquor to me, looking surprised and pained when I refused it.

"Sho, boy, won't ye take none?"

Then he swallowed half of it himself, and smacking his lips, looked longingly at what was left in the can.

"They ain't sca'ce a mouthful left," he said dolefully, "but I 'low we'd ought ter keep it in case of sickness."

So he poured it carefully into the bottle and, corking it well, put it back in its place.

Several days later when I had occasion to go to the cask I picked up the bottle and shook it. To my surprise it gave forth a rattling sound as if it were half full of pebbles. I put it back in its place, and rejoined Cocky, who lay stretched on the slope of the parapet, sucking at his empty pipe.

"Cocky," said I, "I see you've put the diamonds into the rum bottle."

He lifted his head from the rock and looked at me sheepishly.

"Yawss," said he; "I couldn't sleep fur the teethache, t'other night, so I jest took that mouthful o' rum to hold in my mouth till the pain let up. After that it give me sech low sperrits every time I come across that empty bottle that I put them di'monds in her."

"Does that make you feel any better?"

"Sartin sure, Bill, sartin sure. Why, when I take up that thar bottle an' hear them little sons o' guns a-rollin' round in her insides, I git to studyin' right

thar how many drinks o' gin-u-ine, fust-class Jamaiky they is in each an' every one on 'em."

"Well, how do you figure?"

"Blamed ef I ain't stumped."

"Well, how many drinks shall we say to a shilling? Three?"

"No, put it at two, Bill. The stuff is got to be fust-class."

"Then there'd be eight to the dollar, and thirty-two hundred for a four-hundred-dollar diamond."

"Jee-hoshaphat! D'ye s'pose a man 'ud live long enough to drink all that? But hold hard, Bill, ye ain't done that sum c'rect."

"What's wrong about it?"

"Ye didn't figger on no terbacky. Ye never knowed a seafarin' man yet that 'ud enj'y a glass o' rum without a good pipe o' terbacky between his teeth, now did ye?"

"I don't know that I have."

"Waal, then, figger it agin, an' figger it c'rect. Figger one pipeful o' good terbacky, or mebbe two, to each glass o' rum — best Virginny cut plug."

I went to figuring the problem with a bit of soft stone on a smooth place in the rock.

"An' lookee here, Bill."

"Yes."

"Don't ye fergit a pipe — or ye mought as well say two: a good clay pipe fur week days, an' a briar fur Sundays."

XIX

TAP — TAP — TAP

Several dreary weeks passed before the monotony of our life was again broken. There had been twenty-four hours of bad weather, with heavy, driving rain. Then it cleared, and the hot sun, beating upon the drenched cliff, had filled the cave with warm vapor-laden air. Even the draft that had constantly blown in upon us from the chimney grew less and less, until at nightfall it failed us utterly. For hours we tossed sweltering on our comfortless beds, scarce able to breathe in the stifling atmosphere. But at last towards dawn the chimney resumed its function, and in its grateful current we both fell instantly asleep.

When I awoke again, I knew from the blazing splotch of sunshine on the floor of the cave, that the day was well advanced. Sleep, however, still lay heavy upon me; and as I lay there dozing, there gradually stole in upon my benumbed senses the consciousness of a strange sound. First it mingled with my dreams, and was the sound made by Cocky's pipe as he tapped it against the side of our little boat when he had finished his smoking and wished to get rid of the ashes; then the dream faded, and I was wide-awake and listening. There it came again, tap-tap-tap, like a mason's hammer against a

stone. Tap-tap-tap, it went; then a pause, and tap-tap-tap again. Once I would have sworn I could hear the tinkling drop of a fragment of stone on the parapet without. Turning, I looked toward the place where Cocky usually slept; he lay there still sound asleep and snoring gently. My fear conquered by my curiosity, I arose, climbed up cautiously to the parapet, and looked up at the face of the cliff. There, not twenty feet above my head, swinging on a rude seat at the end of a rope, was a man. In one hand he held a little hammer, evidently the source of the noise I had heard. He was not using it now except to steady himself, while he minutely studied the face of the cliff.

Not longer than two or three seconds did I stand there looking up at him; for terror promptly sent me crawling down into the cave again. What it was I feared, I cannot tell, unless it was the belief that here was one of the Portuguese who had found our hiding-place, and had been lowered down upon us by his comrades. At any rate, terrified I was; for when I shook Cocky by the shoulder my teeth were chattering, and my heart was pounding intolerably against my ribs.

"They've got to the top of the cliff," I whispered, as he sat up rubbing his eyes; "and they've sent men down here on ropes."

"What? Who? How?" asked Cocky, sleepily.

"The Portuguese. They've let a man down by a rope from the top of the cliff; he's almost down to the parapet now."

"Sufferin' Jehoshaphat! Ye don't say so!" cried the little man. "Whar's that ol' blunderbuss, boy? I'll teach 'em a lesson, the varmints, to come sneakin' down on us, like bats down a chimbley."

"It's not loaded," I reminded him.

"Give it here, boy. Loaded or not, I'll teach 'em — the lousy bats!"

And snatching the musket from me, he scrambled up to the parapet, with me close at his heels.

The man still swung at about the same place as where I had first seen him; but now he was reaching over to a near-by ledge where some sea birds had nested, and quite regardless of the cries of their owners, darting and circling about him, was rummaging among the nests.

"Come down from thar, ye sneakin' varmint!" shouted Cocky, bringing his very formidable-looking weapon to his shoulder.

The man at the end of the rope started violently, and turning in his seat looked down at us. Under the white helmet he wore, we saw a very pink, round face framed with snow-white hair and whiskers; and through a pair of huge spectacles two large mild blue eyes looked upon us more in astonishment than alarm.

"God bless my soul!" he said. "What have we here?"

"Come down from thar!" repeated Cocky.

"I say, me man, steady with that fowling piece! It might go off, ye know!"

Cocky reluctantly lowered the blunderbuss.

"Come down, then," he insisted.

"Stop a bit! Stop a bit!" said the old gentlemen. And grasping a thin cord that hung near him, he pulled it twice. This was evidently a signal to those who controlled the rope at the top of the cliff, for immediately he began to descend slowly, until he stood beside us on the parapet.

"Come down?" he cried. "God bless my soul, what did ye fancy I'd do? Why, dam-me, sir, I wouldn't have missed this for a carriage and pair! Now then, me man, now then, what have we here? Aha, a cave, eh? Not cliff dwellers — no; facial angle — malar prominences — pigmentation — no, no — speak English — of a sort. Mm — mm — Americans, I presume."

The old gentleman seemed to be thinking aloud, while he was looking us over curiously through his strong spectacles, as though we were a couple of strange specimens which he was classifying.

"Ye've hit it, Mister," said Cocky, who apparently resented this examination, "Americans we be; sea-farin' men, late o' the ship Wanderer, out of New Bedford port. My name is George Ellwood, master navigator; an' this here boy is Mister Willyum Slocum, son o' my owner an' shipped aboard me as passenger."

"I say, me man, I say now! Ye're drawing it a bit too strong, ye know. Captain of a vessel, and no sign of a uniform! Not so much as a shred of gold braid to your sleeve. No, no, me man, it won't do."

"I ain't no gold-braid cap'n, nor never was," said Cocky stoutly; "an' I hain't said nothin' about a cap'n's commission, nuther. 'Navigator,' I said, an' 'navigator' I'll stand by; an' this here boy, Mister Willyum Slocum, son o' my owner, he'll back me up."

"Hm! Haw! Well, I fancy I shall have to take your word for it. But it's a thing quite unheard of on a British merchantman, quite unheard of, I assure ye. However, I'm free to confess a lack of familiarity with the maritime customs of the native Americans. I say, me man, where is this ship of yours, and how d'ye happen to be here? Ye've not given a very satisfactory account of yourselves, ye know."

"Dammit, Mister," cried Cocky, "nuther have ye! An' by Jiminy Cripes, ye'll give an account of yerself, afore ye git another word out o' me!"

And the little man threatened the intruder with his blunderbuss.

"Ah — ah — ah! Careful now with that gun, me man. I am a British subject; me friends are above, there on the cliff, and ye'll harm a hair of me head at your imminent peril."

"Britisher, hay? Waal, s'posin' ye be; I cal'late they ain't nobody round here that's scairt o' Johnny Bull. But who be ye, Mister, an' how in blazes did ye git here?"

"I say, me man, put by that villainous-looking fowling piece. Upon me soul, it makes me nervous, the way ye handle it. Put it by, now, like a reasonable chap, and we'll talk things over like sensible creatures."

"Put it down, Cocky," I interposed, soothingly; "this gentleman means us no harm, I am sure. It isn't loaded, sir, I assure you. We only use it for kindling fires."

"Do ye now?" said the Englishman. "An old flintlock in place of a match. Why, that's rather clever, ye know, rather clever, upon me word. Ye're quite right, me boy, I mean ye no harm; and here's me hand upon it."

We shook hands, Cocky rather grudgingly, to be sure, and then sat down upon the rocks together.

"Now then," the stranger began pompously, "an English gentleman stands for fair play the world over. Ye have been so civil as to give me your names and stations; I can do no less than follow your example. My name is Thomas Clegg. I hold a Master's degree from Cambridge, and have the honor to be an M.R.G.S. Broadly speaking, I am a natural scientist; but I specialize in geology and fossils. I am Shoreham lecturer on Geology at Kensington, and Curator of Fossils at the British Museum."

"Sufferin' Jehoshaphat!" cried Cocky, "ye got some darned big jobs, Mister. But who in tarnation is Emma Gee-us?"

"The Royal Geographic Society," continued Mr. Clegg, "ten months ago sent out the schooner Ranger with a party of scientists for the purpose of investigating some disputed observations on the geologic structure, the fauna and flora of isolated islands of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. To be specific, I

refer to those made by Charles Darwin, while cruising in the Beagle in 1832. I have the honor to be the geologist and fossilologist of this expedition. We are now homeward bound, and have stopped here for a few hours chiefly to examine into the reliability of Darwin's conclusions as to the volcanic origin of these rocks."

During this statement, which conveyed to me little information but that Mr. Clegg was evidently a perfectly respectable Englishman, I had been thinking hard and fast. By the time he had ceased speaking, I had made up my mind to tell him our story without reserve, and to beg him to take us off the rock in the schooner that had so providentially brought him to our aid. Cocky, however, forestalled me in this purpose; though, as you shall see, he fell far short of the frankness with which I had intended to tell the tale.

"Perfessor," he said, "I'm proud to know ye. An' so, I cal'late, is my friend, Mr. Slocum." Here he indicated me with a nod of his head.

"We sot sail out o' New Bedford port August twenty-eighth last, bound fur the South-Atlantic whalin' grounds. Mebbe three weeks ago the Portugee crew riz up an' took the vessel out o' my command."

"Dear me, dear me! A mutiny!" said Mr. Clegg.

"No less'n the truth, Perfessor," asserted Cocky imperturbably, "as ye kin testify, Willyum."

"Y-yes, indeed," I stammered; for his one eye was boring into me like a hot poker.

"I will say this fur 'em, though," he went on, "they was a humane lot — fur Portugees. Instead o' cuttin' our throats, as they mought jest as waal 'a' done, they sot us adrift in one o' the boats."

"What! In midocean?" gasped Mr. Clegg.

"Waal, 'twar out o' soundin's. But I will say we'd a'ready sighted this here rock. So we natcherly pulled fur it. Fust landin' place we come to was this cove, below here. An' thar we found wedged fast between the two clifts, an ol' shipwrecked brig. She lay canted over so's her topmasts leaned agin the clift a'most. We broke out what stores an' water they was aboard her, an' swarmed up the mast to this here ledge, an' drawed the stores up arter us."

"But where is this brig now?" demanded Mr. Clegg, with a shade of suspicion in his voice.

"Burned to the water's edge," said Cocky, "soon arter we comes aloft."

"Burned? How? Spontaneous combustion?"

Cocky scratched his head.

"Waal, mebbe it was," he said, "but we sort o' 'lowed it was them pesky Portugees aimin' to smoke us out. Didn't we, Willyum?"

"Yes," said I, "but we were asleep at the time, and couldn't see how it happened."

"Yawss," said Cocky; "we was asleep, sure enough. Ef ye come out on the ledge, ye kin see what's left of her."

Cocky led him out through the cleft and showed him the blackened timbers and planking half-submerged.

"God bless my soul!" I heard Mr. Clegg exclaim. "Most extraordinary thing I ever heard of in my life!"

Then, not without misgivings, we took him down into the cave, where to our great relief he bestowed far more attention upon the geological structure of the rocks than upon the cases that held the treasure. Upon these he cast but a careless glance.

"Ah, your supplies," he said. "You are quite well provided."

Then, after a careful scrutiny of the rocks: —

"Ah, what have we here? Basaltic columns? By Jove! I say, now, I believe that's what they are. Yes, yes, not a doubt of it, sir, not the least doubt in the world!"

So, hammer in hand, and talking the while in geological terms that were quite beyond my comprehension, he went the round of the cave, chipping off fragments of rock here and there, and storing them away like so many precious stones in his voluminous pockets. He paid particular attention to the chimney in the far corner, calling for a light, and studying the stone which lined it as closely as the flickering torchlight permitted. He even tasted the water, some of which he collected in a small vial, and stowed away with the other specimens.

On returning to the entrance of the cave, he suddenly threw himself down on his knees.

"Stop a bit! Stop a bit!" he cried. "What's this?" And he took up a handful of loose gravel and carried it out on the parapet.

"Aha! Basaltic fragments. Yes, and granite. But how's this? Water-worn! And here are quartz pebbles showing marked attrition; and feldspar sand; and — hello! here are some fragments of shell! H'm, h'm, stop a bit, now stop a bit! Let me see; h'm, h'm. Aha! I have it!"

"Gentlemen" — and he turned to us as though we were his class of students in his college in England — "Gentlemen, we have here absolute demonstration of the volcanic origin of these rocks. There have been two distinct volcanic upheavals of the sea floor. The first raised this mass of basalt and granite out of the sea, so that the waves broke where we now stand. Possibly at the same time, and as a result of the same volcanic convulsion, there occurred the rending asunder of these columns and the consequent formation of this cave. Subsequently, and quite probably within historic times, a second upheaval lifted the whole mass to its present height, and carried with it in this hollow at our feet these few handfuls of sand and rubble, an indisputable record of its origin."

"Yawss, Mister," said Cocky, with a surreptitious wink at me, "I 'low ye've sized it up pooty nigh c'rect, Perfessor, pooty nigh c'rect. Why, they's be'n an earthquake sence we came to this here rock."

"An earthquake?"

"Yawss, an earthquake. Willyum an' me was sittin' on this here gravel-heap, quiet as a couple o' settin' hens, when all to once, br-r-r-ump! An' the next thing we knowed, we was layin' bruised an' sore in the big hole ye see thar now."

"Dear me! Most extraordinary! I shall ask ye before I leave for a detailed account of your most interesting experiences for my notebook."

"Oh, sir!" I cried, "you don't mean to abandon us here?"

"Why, bless my soul, me lad, I hadn't thought of that. Is it possible ye have no means of leaving this rock?"

"None at all, sir," said I.

"Dear me! Why, ye're in rather a predicament, ye know."

His peculiar manner of ejaculating "Dear me!" with all the emphasis on the "dear," and a prolongation of the *ea* sound, was most impressive.

"Yes, sir; but we hope you will take us off."

"Sartin sure," said Cocky. "Tell yer skipper we're stranded here high an' dry, an' he'll send a couple of hands ashore to h'ist us up the clift."

"Tell me what?" queried the puzzled Englishman.

"Yer skipper. That's Yankee fur cap'n. Though, come to think on it, why can't we follow ye up the clift now?"

"Well, really, ye know, — er, — not that I shouldn't be delighted to help ye out of your predicament; but Captain Barclay is, er — well, er — "

"Don't ye try to explain, Perfessor. I know the breed, an' I cal'late ye're right. But even though he is as stiff as starch an' buckram an' gold braid can make him, soon's he's heerd they's a couple o' seafarin' men mastheaded here on this rock, he'd take us off, even if we was niggers."

It was accordingly decided that we should remain behind on the cliff until Captain Barclay should have been notified of our presence, and send some of his crew to take us off. This having been agreed upon, Mr. Clegg straddled his seat, gave the signal that he was ready, and was straightway drawn up to the top of the cliff.

XX

CAPTAIN BARCLAY

FORTUNATELY for us, as we afterward learned, the next day broke fair and warm, with scarce a ripple on the sea. The only preparations we made for our departure were to stow away safely upon our persons a few of the diamonds and as many of the gold pieces as we could conveniently carry without risk of detection.

"Won't do to take away too many," said Cocky. "Not fur seafarin' men. Why, I knowed a man once, a harpooner, he was, aboard o' the Maria C. Winthrop, that had the idee o' collectin' English pennies. Ben Fox, his name was. Every durned copper he got, he kep'. An' the time I knowed him — he must 'a' be'n most sixty year old then — he had more on 'em than what he could count. Used to go to sleep by the time he got past four or five hunnerd. An' nothin' 'd do but he must carry 'em all about in his pockets. Waal, one time he druv his harpoon into a whale — a big ugly bull it was — an' Mr. Whale, he thrashed round fust, an' then put his hellum hard down, an' off to sta'board quick as a wink. 'S luck 'ud have it, the coils o' rope kinked, an' knotted round the post; the boat went over like snap, an' before they knowed what was what, they was all in the sea. Poor Ben, he never knowed

nothin'. He went down like a plummet. No, sir, we on'y want enough gold to fit us out decent an' pay our passage hum, case we git carried over to England. We'll take the di'monds jest to encourage yer father to fit out a ship to come an' git the rest o' the stuff."

Shortly before noon there came a hail from the top of the cliff, to which Cocky replied in his stentorian, "deep-sea" voice. Then we watched as the dangling rope with its narrow seat slowly descended the face of the cliff. Cocky insisted that I should go first.

"Skipper's always the last man to leave his ship," he said. "An' I 'low I'll see ye safe off fust. Fend off easy with yer feet an' don't git her a swingin' or a spinnin', an' ye'll be right as rain."

Not without some misgivings I straddled the little seat, and Cocky gave the three tugs on the line that signaled the men above to haul in the rope. The first few feet were the worst of it. Then I became accustomed to the smooth strong upward motion, and lost much of my nervousness. Only once, about halfway up, there was more swinging and twisting than I found agreeable, and it was more by good fortune than by any efforts of my own that I escaped some hard bumps.

Arrived at the top, I found that the hoisting rope ran through a block at the end of a projecting boom which was supported in the crotch made by two crossed spars. The whole structure was steadied by heavy blocks of stone. Mr. Clegg, who was there,

welcomed me with a firm grasp of my hand, while on either side of him two sailors, in neat dark-blue uniforms, grinned at me amiably. After Cocky's arrival the rope was coiled, the derrick taken down and made up in a compact bundle, and we set off across the rock in a northerly direction. The character of the surface we traversed was rough and hummocky. Here and there the bare rock was covered with a thin layer of soil, which supported a sparse vegetation. Along our path there were occasional hollows in the rock filled with rain water, their margins crowded with gulls and the other sea birds that inhabited the place. They all seemed very tame, scarcely moving out of our way as we approached.

A few minutes later we came in sight of the sea to the north of the rock, and the path led downward along the shoulder of a promontory. Finally the path ended in a narrow ledge, with the sea fifty or sixty feet below on the right. From this we began an abrupt descent, scrambling from ledge to ledge, until at last we reached the water's edge. There we found a tiny harbor formed on the one side by a breakwater of heaped-up fragments of the decaying cliff and on the other by a jutting boulder. In it a small boat might safely lie as long as the sea was ordinarily smooth. One lay there now awaiting us, manned by an officer and two sailors.

"Well, here we are at last, Mr. Tibbets," said Mr. Clegg. "These are the two castaways, Master Slocum, this is our second officer, Mr. Tibbets; Captain Ellwood, Mr. Tibbets."

Mr. Tibbets stiffly saluted first Mr. Clegg, then me, and last — still very stiffly — permitted Cocky to shake him by the hand.

"Proud to know ye, shipmate," said the latter.

But Mr. Tibbets was too deeply engaged in the work of stowing the spars and rope to reply to this salutation.

"Look alive, lads, now, look alive!" he growled, scowling hard at the two seamen, who certainly looked sufficiently alive to suit the most exacting taste. "Now then, a'ready? Shove 'er off, then! Out oars! Give way!"

And the boat danced across the blue water that was just then rippling to a gentle breeze out of the west. As we rounded the promontory that hid her from our view, we sighted the schooner lying hove-to about a mile offshore. To me she seemed a very beautiful ship, especially as we drew nearer, and sail after sail sprang out upon her bare spars like white blossoms bursting into bloom on barren twigs. But the best that Cocky would say of her was that she was "well enough fur the breed."

It was "look alive!" again when we pulled up alongside; and in less time than it would take to tell of it we were all on board and the boat fast in the davits and hoisted inboard. Captain Barclay was a tall, lean man with a red nose, and a sour, morose look on his sallow face.

"Take 'em below, Clegg," he said brusquely. "Take 'em below and don't bother me, there's a good chap."

So under the guidance of our deliverer we went down the companionway into the cabin, where we made ourselves comfortable in the big armchairs — the first real comfort we had known in many a long day.

"If I may offer a suggestion," said Mr. Clegg, "I should counsel circumspection in your dealings with Captain Barclay. He is an excellent man and an exemplary officer — in fact he is late of Her Majesty's Navy, honorably discharged, of course. But he's something of a martinet, ye know, and subject to — er, fits of irritability."

"Uh-huh," said Cocky, nodding his head sagely, "I know the animile: stiff as a ramrod, touchy as a hair trigger, an' hot as burnin' gunpowder."

"Me dear man, ye can't quite expect me to subscribe to that, ye know. But I really must caution ye to show due consideration and respect to — "

"Now, don't ye be scairt, Perfessor. I hain't sarved thirty year afore the mast fur nothin'. Yankee an' Britisher, Frenchman an' Dutchman, I know all their lines an' rigs, an' kin treat 'em accordin'."

In the course of half an hour we heard the great man come tramping down the companion stair as if he owed each step a grudge. At his entrance Cocky, to my surprise, sprang to his feet, and stood straight as a soldier with his right hand held stiffly where the brim of his hat should have been.

"Well, me man," said the captain severely, "what have ye to say for yourself?"

In reply Cocky told very briefly and to the point

the same story that he had already told Mr. Clegg. Almost every other word was a "sir," and his manner was so humble and respectful that I hardly knew him. The one point he dwelt upon at considerable length was the fact that I was the son of a wealthy American shipowner.

"Is all this true?" Captain Barclay asked me sharply.

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"What ships does your father own?"

I enumerated them glibly, giving the tonnage and the captain's name of each.

"H'm," he said, with a shade less of severity in his voice, "ye seem to take an interest in your father's — er — business, me lad."

"I do, sir," I answered warmly.

"And you, sir," he said, turning suddenly upon Cocky, "where did you lose your eye?"

"Off Very Cruz in '32, sir, a-runnin' British muskets through to Santy Anna."

"What? British muskets to Santa Anna? What ship were ye attached to?"

"The Humber Maid, sir, three-master out o' Newcastle. Cap'n John Abernethy, commandin' officer, sir."

"Ah, old John Abernethy, eh? Knew him well. A sailor and a gentleman!" And he eyed Cocky severely as though daring him to contradict his statement.

"Aye, aye, sir," said Cocky stolidly.

"And what was your rating, me man, aboard the

Humber Maid?" asked the captain condescendingly.

"Fust mate, sir."

"First mate! You were first officer to John Abernethy!"

"Aye, aye, sir! Lop twenty year off me age an' clap another eye in me head, an' a smart uniform on me back, an' I 'low I could sign on as mate to ol' Snuffy John, or any of 'em."

To my amazement the captain, instead of knocking him down, burst into a laugh more hearty than I would have believed him capable of.

"Snuffy John!" he cried. "Gad, sir, it takes me back to me boyhood days, when I was a midshipman aboard the old Cormorant. Abernethy was ward-room officer then, and that's what we all called him. Snuffy John! Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

"I cal'late the name stuck to him as long as he lived," said Cocky.

"It did, sir, it did," replied the captain, wiping the tears of unwonted merriment from his eyes, and trying to compose his face to its usual lines of morose dignity.

"Well, sir," he said, grasping Cocky by the hand, "I am glad it has been me good fortune to assist a fellow sailor in distress, and especially a shipmate of my old friend John Abernethy. Tripp," turning to the steward who had just entered, "assign these gentlemen to the two vacant berths and see that they have everything they require to make them comfortable."

Our new quarters seemed indeed luxurious com-

pared to the hardships and discomforts we had endured in the past few weeks. Tripp, the steward, borrowed a razor and a suit of clothes for Cocky from Mr. Jones, the second mate. But he shook his head despondingly when he looked at me.

"Hi'm afride, sir," he said, "we 'aven't nawthin' aboard as 'ud suit, on account o' not 'avin' no boy — 'old on, though, there were a boy: Halfred, 'is nime were. 'E cut 'is stick, when we touched at Sydney, 'e did. Hi'll over'aul the dunnage 'e left be'ind 'im — though, to be sure there won't be nothin' in it as 'ud be 'ardly the thing for a young gentleman of your station."

Appropriate or not, the suit of clothes he brought me proved perfectly satisfactory to me. They were, he told me, Alfred's Sunday best: dark blue trousers belled at the bottom, a blouse of the same material with red anchors on the wide collar, and a cloth cap with a shiny visor. Although I was somewhat worried about the mysterious expression, "cut his stick," which I feared might mean that the boy had died, I found the clothes so clean and neat that I soon forgot all about their owner.

Imagine my surprise when I entered the cabin in response to Tripp's summons to dinner, and stood face to face with a new and strangely unfamiliar Cocky. His hair was smoothly brushed, his face clean shaven and shiny from soap, and his figure arrayed in the trim blue uniform of the second mate. But he cocked his eye at me in quite the usual manner.

"Come aboard, Master Slocum, come aboard!" he said.

The company at the table was the most singular one I have ever met in all my life. There was the captain, morose and taciturn, his mind intent upon his meat and drink. The first mate, Mr. Roberts, was a short, ruddy-faced man with a friendly twinkle in his eye. Capital company I thought he must be, though the forbidding demeanor of his superior, and the intellectual tone of the conversation round the table, seemed to have subdued his spirits considerably. I sat at his right hand and Cocky at his left; and after the first formalities were over, we three managed to start a friendly talk in an undertone, that quickly led to better acquaintance.

There were five other passengers besides Mr. Clegg, all of them, as I soon learned, scientists of one kind or another. They were, with one exception, elderly, he being a tall young man with a stoop, who wore gold-rimmed spectacles and a very high-cut waistcoat. As he was never addressed by any other name but "Parson," and as he mumbled a few unintelligible words for a grace before we took our seats about the table, I supposed he was a clergyman. No sooner had the meal fairly begun than Mr. Clegg laid out his specimens on the tablecloth beside his plate and set to lecturing on them. His hearers, instead of hanging respectfully on his words, kept up a constant fire of interruptions, criticism, contradictions and even ridicule. Then from other quarters of the table would come a cross

fire of criticism of criticism, and contradiction of contradiction, until Babel reigned. Even if I had understood the matter of their discourse I doubt if I could have followed the thread of the argument; for the whole six were talking at once, and Mr. Clegg and another stout, red-faced gentleman were shouting and pounding on the table with their fists. On the occasion of a slight lull in the Bedlam, Mr. Clegg turned to Cocky.

"Ye will bear me out in this, Captain Ellwood?" he said.

"I cal'late I'll have ter, Perfessor; but it'll be feet foremost with a busted blood-vessel, ef ye don't ease her off a mite."

But Mr. Clegg had taken his assent for granted, and with a wave of his hand in Cocky's direction, resumed his shouting and pounding quite oblivious of the fact that the little man had spoken. Captain Barclay, having in an incredibly short time gulped down a generous quantity of food and drink, rose stiffly from his seat and stalked solemnly up the companion stair.

This was but a fair sample of all the meals we sat through at the Ranger's cabin table. The fare served, except for the fact that it was ample and uncommonly good for a vessel at sea, has left little impression on my memory; but the image of the quarreling, table-thumping scientists, and of the sour-faced captain bolting his food in his haste to get away from the turmoil, is still vivid in my mind.

It was from the first mate that I learned how nar-

rowly we had escaped being left behind on the rock. Throughout the voyage, he told me, the captain had grumbled and chafed at the frequent halts he was called upon to make at various isolated and usually harborless islets in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Had the day of our departure brought the least threatening of foul weather, had the barometer fallen a few points, the wind or the sea risen, or had the skies held so much as a cloud the size of a man's hand, he would positively have forbidden the rescue, and would have sailed away without the slightest compunction. Not that he would have abandoned us to our fate. On the contrary, he would at the first opportunity have communicated our predicament to either a British or an American vessel, excusing his failure to take us off by the dangerous character of the rock and the threatening aspect of the weather. Notwithstanding all this, I shall always look upon Captain Barclay as a fine specimen of a British sailor. During our short stay aboard the Ranger we saw something of what he had to endure at the hands of his peculiar cargo of passengers, and could readily believe that his patience and temper were often severely tried. Although Cocky would never agree with me upon this point, I always thought that under less harassing circumstances no peril either to himself or to his ship would have kept Captain Barclay from obeying most punctiliously the dictates of humanity.

Except for a single storm of wind and rain the weather held fair; and the breeze freshening as we

drew further north, we made Funchal, where we were to touch for water, in fifteen days. Scarcely had we dropped anchor in the beautiful harbor when a small boat put off from the shore, and after some parley with the captain drew in alongside. A man came up the steps that were let down over the side for him, and was led aft to the awning under which we were all sitting. Captain Barclay received him with his usual morose dignity, and went below into the cabin with him. In the course of half an hour, the steward came up to tell Cocky and me that the captain desired our presence in the cabin.

We found the two men at the table, the captain on one side and the stranger on the other, and a bottle of spirits between them.

"Master Slocum," said the captain, "this is Mr. Eldredge, your father's agent here in Madeira."

The stranger rose to his feet, eyed me keenly with his sharp black eyes, and then shook me by the hand. He was a short man, very straight and very slim. A few gray hairs fringed his bald pate, and the skin of his face, pink over his cheeks, but yellow elsewhere, was drawn into a myriad of tiny wrinkles when he spoke or smiled. He looked like a foreigner, but at the first words he uttered I knew him for one of our own people, a New England Quaker.

"Ah, William," and his dark eyes kindled as he pressed my hand, "thee does not know me, but I know thee. Years ago I once dandled thee on my knee in the old home beside the river."

I told him everything, not even omitting the find-

ing of the treasure; for under those black eyes shining down upon my face in kindness, the slightest deviation from the truth, even if I had wished to deceive him, would have been impossible. My story finished, he sat silent for a space, his brow knit in thought. Then he looked at Captain Barclay with a smile.

"Not quite the same tale as thee had from Friend Ellwood, is it?" he said with a gentle irony in his voice. "Nay," he continued, when I would have interrupted him in Cocky's defense, "thee need not speak for thy friend. He has but shown himself worldly-wise in telling Friend Barclay something less than the truth. Not knowing what manner of man he had to deal with, it was perhaps, from his point of view, the safer thing to do. However, we now know that the truth would have served better than a lie."

Cocky gulped hard, but said nothing.

"To change the subject," went on Mr. Eldredge, "I have good news for thee. Thy uncle, Friend Lee, left here in thy father's vessel, the Leviathan, but three days since. Now, now!" he cried, as my disappointment painted itself only too plainly upon my face, "cheer up, my little man! He is to call here again without fail in three weeks, hoping for news of thee and the Wanderer. So thee shall be my guest ashore until his return; and thee also," to Cocky, "if thee will."

Before we took our leave of Captain Barclay, I thanked him for his kindness to us, and tried to press

upon him a few of the coins I had brought away from the cave.

"Demmit, sir!" he cried fiercely, "have I come down so low that I must be paid for doing my plain duty? Put it up, lad, put it up!"

"But your employers," I persisted, "have been put to the extra expense of feeding us."

"The Royal Geographic Society," he replied grimly, "can afford it, I fancy; they will have to, at any rate."

I then sought out Tripp, the steward, and after bestowing upon him a gratuity that left his eyes as big as saucers, entrusted to him a sum of money to be paid over to Alfred's mother in England in return for the suit of clothes I had appropriated.

"Wery 'andsome of ye, hi'm sure, sir," said Tripp, warmly.

But I doubt if the bereaved mother in England ever profited by my generosity. For two days later as I was walking along the water front with Mr. Eldredge, who should come reeling out of one of the vile drinking places that swarm there but this same Tripp, drunk as a lord on the money I had given him.

XXI

COCKY IS CLEARED

Mr. Eldredge's house stood a mile or two from the shore, on the arena-like slope that overlooked the town, the harbor and the open sea beyond. He was, as we learned, a bachelor, living there alone except for an old Portuguese couple who kept his house and waited upon him. Each morning his horse — for there were no carriages on the island — was brought round to the door and, mounting it, he rode down into the town where he had a dingy little office near the water's edge.

I still look back upon the two weeks we spent there as perhaps the most delightful in my whole life. Mr. Eldredge had a small sloop that he placed at our disposal; and he sometimes himself accompanied us upon our excursions. One day we would fish in the harbor or, if the weather were fair, just outside in the open sea; another would find us swimming in the waters of a little cove across the harbor, where we were reasonably secure against the sharks that infest these waters. Now we would simply drift aimlessly along over the blue water, reveling in the soft balmy air and the pleasant skies; and again we would desert the sea for a day or two to wander, sometimes afoot, but oftener astride of donkeys, about the terraced gardens and vineyards above the

town. Once or twice we traveled even farther, exploring the mountains that rose beyond the curved arena encircling the harbor, and the picturesque ravines that seamed their slopes. Altogether, land and sea, it seemed to us the most beautiful place in the world.

Mr. Eldredge received my raptures with a wistful smile.

"But how," said I, "can anyone bring himself to live anywhere else, who knows how lovely it is here?"

"Yet thee will leave it all, William," he said gently, "and that gladly, when thy uncle's ship returns."

"That is only because of mother and father. But if they were here — "

"William," he said solemnly, and the dark eyes grew soft as they looked steadily into mine, "believe me, there are men who would give up all this loveliness — aye, and all they possess besides, for one hour of life upon our raw New England coast."

The weeks lengthened into a month, and I was growing somewhat anxious for my uncle's safety, when at last one morning we awoke to see the Leviathan entering the harbor. She was one of the newest of my father's vessels, and made a noble picture as the steady west wind bore her in from the sea. Breakfast was a hasty and unceremonious meal that morning. The last mouthfuls of it I swallowed as I spurred the mule I rode to a gallop, that I might reach the water front before they let go the anchor. As it was, we saw the splash of it just as our boat pushed off from the shore.

Of my uncle's joy and astonishment when he saw me come up over the ship's side it is quite unnecessary to speak.

"Why, Will!" he cried, and the next instant had me fast in his arms. Then he held me off at arm's length and took a long look at me.

"I declare," said he, "you are grown almost to be a man. So tall and brown and well! I would give this vessel and cargo if thy mother could see thee this instant."

Uncle William was a Quaker, but he had mingled so much with the world's people that he had come to use our form of speech only under stress of strong feeling.

He turned sternly to Cocky: —

"Well, sir, and what have you to say for yourself?"

His voice was severe and merciless, and the look he bent upon poor Cocky was hard and cold as steel. The little man, quite overcome by my uncle's hostile attitude, stood silent and embarrassed, an image of abject guilt.

"I'll tell you all about it, uncle," I volunteered. "I know just as much about it as Co — er — Ellwood."

"No, ye won't, Master Slocum," said Cocky, straightening himself with a visible effort, and facing my uncle boldly, "nor ye don't know so much about it as ye think fur, nuther."

"Tell me first," said my uncle, still hard and cold, "where you left the Wanderer?"

" 'Twere t'other way about, sir; the Wanderer she left us."

"That's true, uncle," said I, "we got away from them at the rock, and they sailed away from us and left us there."

"Who did you get away from?"

"The Portuguese — " I was beginning; but Cocky interrupted me with a shake of the head.

"No, they wan't Portugees. I cal'late ye better let me tell this yarn, Master Slocum.

"Ye remember, Cap'n Lee," he said, turning to my uncle, "that yarn about the slaver ye warped out o' me that day down in Black Rock country?"

"Yes," said my uncle shortly.

"Waal, they was Cape Verders, most on 'em, not Portugees, like I told ye; an' a wickeder, crueler pack o' halfbreeds never beat a nigger nor cut a throat. When they got away from the brig in the boats they wan't a man among 'em knowed what part o' the Atlantic they was wrecked in. Fur a matter o' two weeks they drifted about, an' finally was picked up by a Norway whaler homeward bound. The Norway cap'n, not bein' in need o' hands, was glad to drop 'em off at the Azores; an' from thar, knowin' that I war a Yankee an' the on'y man out o' the hull crew smart enough to figger out whar the ol' brig lay, they took ship fur New Bedford aboard the São Miguel.

"As the devil would have it, I got to Boston the week afore, an' was on the New Bedford wharves huntin' a berth, when they landed. Two on 'em seed

me thar, an' follered me to the place whar I was a-stayin'. They tried to git me to go in with 'em in a crazy plan to sail back to the ol' brig an' git that treasure. They 'lowed they'd have ter have me to pilot 'em. I spoke 'em fair, o' course, but put 'em off till th' next day. I slipped my cable at dawn the next mornin', thinkin' to throw them off me course. But it wan't no use. They was arter me hotfoot, an' had overhauled me on the shore road, when Mr. Slocum come along an' scairt 'em off.

"They knowed whar I was, though, an' hung about the yards, waitin' fur another chance to git me. When they seed the Wanderer a-layin' thar' most ready to put to sea, an' found out I was aboard her as watchman, I s'pose the crazy fools made up their minds to kidnap the two of us to once."

"The two of you?" queried my uncle.

"Yawss, the two of us: the ship an' me, I mean. They didn't cal'late to git this young gentleman into the bargain, an' was turr'ble put out about him, too."

"Do you mean to say," interrupted my uncle, still voicing his stern suspicion, "that that pack of pirates navigated the ship out through the channel at night?"

"No, sir, I don't. 'Twas I done that, an' with a knife at me ribs too." Cocky seemed rather proud than ashamed of the exploit.

"Then where did they take the ship?"

"Fust to the Azores, sir, an' then on to the Rock."

"St. Paul's? Who was their navigator?"

"Me, sir."

"And how, sir, do you propose to convince me,

and Mr. Slocum, and a judge and jury back in New Bedford, that you were not the willing accomplice of these scoundrels?"

Cocky's jaw dropped, and his face, abject in its misery, turned from my uncle to me.

"Uncle William," I said boldly, "I think you are quite mistaken about Co — Mr. Ellwood."

"Will," he said severely, "you'd much better leave this matter to me and your father. However, if you think there is anything to be said for this — er — fellow, speak it out."

"Well," said I, "these men set upon him and left him bleeding and unconscious in the road. That does not look as if he were one of them."

My uncle nodded.

"Then, he did not ask to be put on the ship as a watchman; it was father's idea to put him there. He wanted father to put a crew aboard her."

"That's true," said my uncle doubtfully.

"And when they got the ship safely out of the bay, they would naturally — such scoundrels as we know them to be — want to put me out of the way: cut my throat, or throw me overboard, would they not?"

"Have you any reason for supposing they had any such intention?"

"Yes, the man who brought me food when I was shut up in the hold hinted as much more than once."

"And Ellwood prevented them from carrying out their purpose?"

"He bargained with them. He consented to navigate the ship to the Azores only on condition that

they would agree not to harm me. They were also to give me the freedom of the ship, and release us both when we reached the islands."

"And if they had refused his proposal?"

"He would not have raised a hand to help them, do what they would."

"Is this the truth, Ellwood?" asked my uncle.

"Aye, aye, sir. But it wan't on'y the storm that give me the chance. Afore that, when I cal'lated they'd made way with the boy, I'd laid down a true course fur 'em. The southeaster blowed 'em way off their bearin's, and they come to me to sot 'em straight agin. By that time me an' the boy had got together in the hold; so I got the idee o' bargainin' with 'em. I was always a turr'ble hand to bargain, Cap'n Lee."

"Well, did they stick to their end of the bargain, and let you go free at the Azores?"

"Not them," replied Cocky, "nor they never would. They knowed we could hang 'em, ef once we got clean away from 'em. Soon as we sighted the islands they clapped us in our room, an' I cal'late they aimed to cut our throats an' drop us over the side arter they got to sea agin. That's why we broke out an' tried to escape."

"You tried to escape, eh?"

"Yawss, but 'twan't no use. They kotched us an' brung us back. Ye see, they had it all fixed up to pick up a navigator thar. He did come aboard — him an' some o' their own men, that they'd left thar to git ready stores an' water an' sich fur 'em. Waal,

when he come aboard, fust thing they got into an argyment — about his share in the stuff it was — an' he got the wrong end of it."

"They killed him?"

"Yawss, knife between the ribs. That throwed 'em back on me agin, an' I got another chance to strike a bargain with 'em. Agreed to navigate the vessel whar they wanted to go — "

"Where was that?"

"St. Paul's Rocks."

"Why, Cocky, you told me — " I exclaimed, but Cocky interrupted me.

"Yawss, I told ye I didn't know the name o' the place, but I did. I told ye a sight o' lies, Bill; the most on 'em to oncourage ye. But this one I told ye fur fear they mought git to know the right name o' the place. That was the on'y holt I had over 'em."

"And you found the rocks?"

"Yawss, an' we found the brig. But we was too late. They was someone thar afore us, an' the treasure was gone. Natcherly they put it onto me, an' strung me up by the thumbs to make me tell whar I'd hid it. This youngster here, an' Abner — he was a shipwrecked feller we'd picked up — when they seed how things was a-goin', they hid till the Portugees was gone. Then they come out an' cut me down."

He went on rehearsing the whole history of our adventures, giving, of course, a ridiculously exaggerated importance to the small part my sagacity

had played in our ultimate preservation. Watching my uncle's face, I was relieved to note how the hard severity of it gradually softened as the story progressed. At the end he turned to me with a smile on his lips.

"Will," he said, "this is all true, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, every word; except that he has made a great deal of the little I did, and very little of the many brave things he did himself."

"Now, don't ye believe it, Cap'n Lee, sir. That thar boy, he's got grit, an' he's got brains, an' he's got eddication. He's fit right now to be President, an' when he's growed up, he'll be Commodore o' the Navy, I'll bet a doughnut."

"I see we've misjudged you, Ellwood," said my uncle, taking the little man's hand and shaking it cordially. "You have taken the best of care of this young man; you have saved his life more than once; and I believe you would have saved the vessel for us if it had been possible. When you get back to New Bedford, we shall have to find something better for you to do than pottering about the sail loft."

"Thankee, sir," said Cocky, with a grin that showed the few yellow stumps of teeth he had, and seamed his brown face with wrinkles. "But Cap'n Lee, ye ain't a-goin' to p'int her nose towards home, ontil ye've picked up that treasure down to the Rock, be ye?"

Cocky's voice was pitched high from anxiety. But though my uncle smiled, his face was firm.

"No, sir," he said; "no more treasure-hunting this

year. It has cost enough already, God knows. My only concern now is to recover the Wanderer. I have warned the authorities at Bermuda, the Azores, and the Canaries, on my way south, and I have just come from the Cape Verdes, where they are also on the lookout for her. We're homeward bound, now; and except that I shall look in again at the Azores, I shall sail as straight a course as wind and weather permit."

"But, uncle," I protested, my disappointment, I dare say, writ clear upon my face, "just think of all that gold and silver lying there free to anyone that happens to find it. Let us go back for it before we sail for the Azores."

My uncle looked at me quizzically, but shook his head.

"No, you incorrigible young buccaneer," he said, "I'm going to take you home to your mother before you get into any more trouble. However, if you are still of the same mind next summer, I promise you that we will fit out a ship and go treasure-hunting again."

"It will be too late then," said I sulkily.

"Shame on you, Will!" he cried. "You, the son of a rich man, to be grasping after paltry gold and silver that you do not need and cannot use! I know" — when I, flushed and angry, would have interrupted him — "I know: it is not so much that you crave the treasure itself, but that you might crown this first adventure of your life with success. My boy, there are things in this world that are more pre-

cious than wealth, success or even good repute; one of them is the love of such a mother as thine. Haste thee home to her, and thank God, if His mercy bring thee safe and sound to her arms."

To this I could make no answer, save to assent. Accordingly, on the following day I took affectionate leave of my new friend, Mr. Eldredge, who rowed us out to the ship just as the crew was getting up the anchor. As we waved our adieus to him from the rail, the vessel gathered way; and by the time we had seen the last of him, we were out of the harbor, and buffeting the swell of the great Atlantic.

XXII

SOME NEW EXPERIENCES

THE voyage to the Azores was uneventful, with winds which though favorable had at times the weight of a gale, and kicked up more of a sea than I found agreeable. Upon reaching Fayal, we got little satisfaction from our consul there. He had been warned to look out for the Wanderer, and to make inquiries regarding her from all vessels touching at that port; but all to no purpose. He had no news for us. So it was up anchor again, and westward across the Atlantic.

It was years before I could speak, or even think, of that stormy crossing without shame and chagrin. For I, the sailor, hardy and courageous, an adventurer that could spin yarns with the best of them — I was not only outrageously seasick, but — shame, black shame upon me! — I was limp and helpless from abject fear. It was in vain that my uncle and Cocky tried to salve my pride. That they had each upon like occasion suffered the same qualms, that they had both feared for the safety of the ship, mattered not a jot. I, who had not been afraid when kidnapped in the dark hold of the Wanderer, who had faced the black-bearded slavers, who had scaled the cliff in the darkness, who had narrowly escaped a horrible death by fire — *I* was wretchedly seasick and miserably afraid!

Looking back now upon that terrible voyage, I cannot wonder at my failure to live up to my own high ideal of heroism. Two days out from the Azores we met the first of the three storms we were to encounter before making port. The first two I endured bravely, though the sleet and snow and icy wind drove below all whom stern duty did not oblige to stay on deck. Finally there came out of the northwest a howling demon of a storm, whose fury laid the vessel on her beam ends in a smother of foam and spray and ice-cold green sea-water. The seas were still running high as a result of the last storm, and they seemed to wash right over the staggering ship. In that moment I was awestruck, and the horror of a death in that pitiless sea quite overcame me. Slowly and painfully the straining hull regained an even keel. But no sooner had I gasped out my relief than there began the most terrible rolling and pitching I have ever experienced; a roll to port and with it a tremendous upheaval of the bows; then the crash and rush of a surge breaking over her stern; a roll to starboard, the mad downward plunge of the bows into the depths of the sea, the slow staggering rise, and the bang, like a salvo of cannon, when tons of rushing water smote square upon her bow, and every timber shuddered at the blow. Then the whole thing was repeated, only all mixed up. Through it all I heard the shriek of the gale as it tore through the rigging, and the hiss and rattle of sleet and spindrift.

After a short half hour of the storm I was sud-

denly aware of a deathly sickness that, quickly mounting to a climax of violent retching, left me limp and sweat-drenched in my berth. Then in my moment of weakness came fear, and gripped me. Strength and will there was none to resist.

But even now I would rather not dwell on those hours. God send I may meet my death more like a man!

On the second day of the storm the main-topmast snapped close to the crosstrees and before it could be cut away had battered into kindling a good fathom's length of the lee bulwarks. On that same day the second mate was swept overboard, and Cocky took his place. All this my uncle told me later, remarking besides that the little man had shown unusual courage, judgment, and seamanship throughout the bad weather.

By the third day the storm showed signs of having blown itself out. The wind had lost something of its weight, and the seas, though still mountain-high, seemed sluggish and sullen. That morning I had so far conquered my weakness as to crawl up the companion, and, too shamed to meet my shipmates, had secluded myself in the lee of the afterhouse. As I crept by, I caught a glimpse of my uncle, sextant in hand, on the poop deck. He was anxious, I knew, about our position, and was hoping for a sight of the sun through the breaking clouds to southward.

But at length the clouds broke, and before noon the sun was shining clear from a patch of blue sky. My uncle took his observations at noon, sending

Cocky up, after he had figured out our position, to set a course for the helmsman.

"Where are we?" I asked him.

"Pooty nigh a hunnerd mile east-no'theast o' Hatteras," said he.

"Hatteras?" I repeated. "Cocky, are we very far from home?"

"We ain't a-goin' home — not in this here vessel, we ain't. She's pooty bad strained an's makin' consider'ble water. So Cap'n Lee, he cal'lates he'll make Norfolk, an' git home overland."

Accordingly on a bright December afternoon an ice-clad ship, her main-topmast gone and her starboard bulwarks rudely patched, crept through the Virginia Capes and dropped anchor in Hampton Roads. We slept on board that night, and early the next morning left Norfolk by steamboat for Baltimore.

This was my first experience of the new steam-propelled vessels that were then just gaining supremacy in maritime traffic. I had heard, to be sure, of the wonderful steam packets that crossed the Atlantic, storm or calm, in two or three weeks. Upon one occasion, when my uncle had taken me on a pleasure trip in his sloop, I had even seen the smoke on the southern horizon. But this fussy little boat, with a great wooden walking-beam balanced amidships and a wooden-bladed paddle-wheel on either side, was the first steamboat I had any close acquaintance with. Cocky was disgusted and scornful, refusing to be impressed by the fact that the

little craft was making a good eight knots against a light breeze.

"Call this a ship?" he said. "A scow with a try-out kittle is more like. Whar'd she be in a seaway, I wan' to know? An' she's li'ble to ketch fire or bust up any time, ef that thar seesaw don't r'ar up an' stove her bottom out fust. No, sir, give me a real ship!"

Even my uncle was disposed to assume a critical and patronizing attitude. This was all very well, said he, for inland waters; but it was still in the experimental stage. Even the packets had to carry sail, in case the machinery failed to work, and to steady them in bad weather. And as for him, he doubted if a quick voyage was as much to be desired as a safe one.

"That's jest what they be!" agreed Cocky sagely. "Goll-dasted experiments that always blow up in the end!"

When we reached Baltimore the next morning, I encountered another novelty in the steam-drawn train that was to carry us along iron rails all the way to Philadelphia. This the queer-looking locomotive proceeded to do in a remarkably efficient manner. It constantly belched forth either clouds of black smoke and sparks or clouds of white steam, and often both together. It also emitted tremendous, disquieting grunts and hisses, and now and then would ring a bell for minutes together. All this caused us all no little uneasiness, particularly Cocky, who was quite sure a score of times on the trip that the "durn thin'

was either afire, or 'busted down,' or 'blowed up.'" In spite of these forebodings we raced along the rails almost twice as fast as four horses could draw a stagecoach, and arrived quite safely in Philadelphia shortly after noon. There we were ferried across the Delaware River in another smaller paddle-wheeled boat to a waiting train, that whirled us across the flat farmlands of New Jersey to the town of Perth Amboy. Once more we changed to a steamboat, that churned her way up through the beautiful bay to the great city of New York. On the way I had my first sight of one of the wonderful sea-going packets. She was a fine vessel, long and slim, though of fully 3000 tons, my uncle told me. Outward bound with favoring wind and tide, she carried a cloud of canvas in addition to her steam power. In comparison to her, the ferryboat certainly did look like a scow.

"Yup," grunted Cocky, "a likely enough vessel, an' a pooty pair o' heels. But she's too durn slim in the waist fur my taste. Give her half agin the beam she's got, an' take away the smoke pot an' water wheels, an' I'd sign on fur a v'yage any day."

She swept on seaward as we entered the Narrows; and by the time we reached our wharf, there was not even a trail of smoke to tell where she had disappeared.

It was so dark when we drove from the wharf to the hotel that I could see little of the city but the solid rows of brick and stone buildings rising three and four stories from the paved sidewalks and, dim against the sky, the form of a church spire towering

high above them all. The hotel itself seemed a very grand place indeed, with its bright lights, its fashionably clad men, and the pretty women in their dainty clothes and flashing jewels. They all made me feel quite ashamed of my rough, plain garments, and of Cocky's uncouthness. But the white-aproned negro who served us showed us such deference, and was so smilingly polite throughout the meal, that I was soon at my ease again.

The next morning we had an hour for sightseeing before our train left. There was the grim old Battery on the water front, with the docks stretching up the two rivers on either side. Beyond lay the harbor thronged with ships, small and large, steam and sail, and flying every flag in the whole world, though the greater number of them showed our own stars and stripes. Then there was the large, new brownstone church with its stone spire towering far above the city; the granite Customhouse, and the beautiful white marble City Hall with its gilded dome, set in the midst of a little park of its own. Leading straight up from the Battery through the heart of the city ran the main street, which is called Broadway, though it seemed to me much narrower than most of our elm-lined New England village roads. Leading out of it on either side were innumerable streets and lanes, some crooked and some straight, but all close-set with brick houses, and ending, if you followed them far enough, at the North River on the one hand, and the East River on the other.

All too soon the hour passed and we took our seats

in the waiting train. Rather to my disappointment this was drawn soberly through the streets to the outskirts of the city by several spans of horses. There, however, the puffing engine met us, and whirled us off smartly upon our way. The rails skirted the Connecticut shore, very much as they do to-day, but we only had occasional glimpses of the Long Island Sound through the leafless trees, or across snow-clad meadows or marsh-lined inlets, as we sped onward. Now and then we would stop at the growing towns and villages that were springing up along the railroad. We flew miraculously across the broad Housatonic, the narrow bridge that supported us being quite invisible from the car window. An hour later, just in time for dinner, we drew into New Haven town.

Then, refreshed by food and drink, we sped on again along a more recently constructed road that still hugged the shore. The roadbed was so rough that the train rocked like a vessel at sea, so that some of the travelers actually became seasick. At New London we were ferried across the Thames to the train for Providence and Boston. This part of the road was the worst we had yet been over. About five miles beyond the ferry the train was stopped because of the damaged track, which was undergoing repairs. The rails there were wooden timbers having iron bands fastened along their edges for the wheels to run upon. One of the bands had become loose at one end, had caught the wheel of a passing car, and curling up like a snake, had pierced the floor of the

car and killed a passenger by transfixing his body. The repairs were completed at last, and the train went on again, reaching Providence, where we were to spend the night, without further mishap.

The next morning we found the ground covered thickly with a new fall of snow. Accordingly my uncle hired a roomy two-seated sleigh with an ample supply of buffalo robes and a pair of lively horses, and by ten o'clock we were toiling up the long hill to the east of the town. Then came the brisk drive across the neck of land that separates Narragansett and Buzzard's Bays. Well I remember the sting of the north wind in my face, the muffled rhythm of the horses' hoofs upon the snow. We dined plentifully at a little wayside inn, and then off again through the crisp December sunshine. The shadows were lengthening before we came upon the first familiar landmarks.

"Thar's the Bay," shouted Cocky, as we topped a low hill, and a new vista opened to the southeast. There it was, a gray patch of water that merged imperceptibly into the horizon, and disappeared as we descended the hill. Next we spied the big wheel and stack of the salt works on the marshes, and the white spire of the Congregational meetinghouse piercing the tangle of the black elm-branches. Finally, as we whisked round the shoulder of the hill, there lay the Pool, steel-gray between its snow-clad banks. But beyond, where the shipyards had stood — the half-built hull in the stocks, the gray-shingled sheds and lofts, and my father's white-

gabled house — we saw nothing but a desolation of charred ruins, from the midst of which the two chimneys thrust up their shapes, gaunt and blackened against the winter sky.

XXIII

THE WANDERER AND I COME HOME

A MOMENT passed before any one of us grasped the full significance of the disaster.

"My God!" whispered my uncle. The exclamation was wrung, one might say involuntarily, from his lips; for he was a reverent man, as sailors go, and rarely took the name of the Lord in vain. I saw, too, as I turned around to look at him, that his face was as white as it could be under the bronze of the sea, and his lips were firmly compressed. Though Cocky for once had nothing to say, I felt him pass his arm behind my back to grasp my shoulders and draw me close. I was keen enough to understand that they both feared the worst, and this well-meant show of sympathy sent a chill to my heart.

"Stop here," commanded my uncle, when the sleigh, having sped across the bridge, was turning the corner by Henry Pearce's store. He was out in the road before the sleigh stopped and, running up the steps, disappeared into the building.

At last, after what to my anxiety seemed hours, he came out again with a smile that told his good news before he had spoken.

"They're all right," he cried, "no one hurt — "

" 'Ceptin' ol' Ezry Huggins," added Henry, who stood in the doorway behind him. "He got a splinter

in his hand tryin' to move his woodpile out o' danger."

"How did it ketch afire, Cap'n?" asked Cocky.

"Waal, it seems Solomon Boggs left his tobacco in the carpenter shop and couldn't think where he'd left it till after dark. The match he struck when he was hunting for it exploded and set fire to the shavings."

"Tut, tut, tut, tut!" clucked Cocky. "It does beat all how some folks is too tarnation lazy to light a lantern, don't it?"

"Solomon's wife an't left off scoldin' him fur his carelessness yet," said Henry, "an' I've heerd tell he 'lows he'll go to sea again come spring — can't stand it no longer."

"How are mother and father?" I managed to quaver.

"Why, they're right smart — considerin'," said Henry. "David Swift took them in after the fire, and they're stayin' there still."

"The fourth house on the sta'board side of the road," my uncle instructed the driver, as he stepped back into the sleigh.

When we drew up at Friend David's door, I was on the point of rushing at once into the house, but my uncle stopped me.

"Let me go first, Will," he said.

So he opened the front door quietly, and we heard him stamping the snow off his feet in the entry. Then came my father's voice, vibrant and deep, from a room on the right.

"What! Thee, William? And come back alone?"

There was that in his voice, even and restrained as it ever was, that brought a lump to my throat.

"Where is Ruth?" asked my uncle as they stood together in the entry. Then someone closed the door, which my uncle had inadvertently left on a crack, and we heard no more.

It seemed a long time, but it could actually have been no more than a few minutes, before my uncle came to the door again.

"Come," he said, "and quietly, lad."

Up the oaken stair he led me, and down the passage to the door of one of the back rooms. He lifted the latch and pushed me in.

There upon a great four-poster bed lay my mother, her shoulders propped high upon the pillows. Her face was pale, her eyes red from recent weeping. In spite of her happy smile and the joy that shone in her countenance, a sudden terror clutched my heart.

"Oh, Mother, Mother!" I cried; and before a stout old woman who rose from a chair by the fire to forbid me, could bar the way, I had flung myself on the bed, and in a passion of weeping pillowed my face upon my mother's breast.

"There, there, Will," said she, patting my shoulder and kissing my hair again and again. "There, there, my boy, it's all over now, and thee is safe at home again."

"It isn't that, Mother," I said brokenly, "but to come home and find our house and yards burned and thee lying here ill."

"This will mean fever before the day is over," interposed the stout woman, fussily. But my mother waved her aside, and clasped me all the closer.

"Not ill, my boy," she said, "but mending fast. And now that I have thee safe at home once more, I am quite well and the terrible fire is nothing. Stand off, that I take a good look at thee. How tall thee is and strong! And brown and well, too. Sit here again; I have something wonderful to tell thee."

She drew me back to a seat on the edge of the bed, her hand in mine, her lips gently smiling, and her soft dove's eyes looking up at me lovingly.

"My son, we have mourned thee as one dead even before the fire took from us our home, and thy father's means of livelihood. In these dark days we might, but for the grace of God, have doubted His goodness and mercy. Then a week ago last First Day our faith was justified, for God sent us a little daughter to comfort us. And now He has brought thee back — oh, my son! My heart flows over with thankfulness!"

She was silent for a moment, and I knew from the look in her face that she was praying. Then she pressed my hand.

"Show William his sister, Friend Howland," she said.

The stout woman waddled across the room to an old mahogany cradle, and turning back the soft wool coverlet, gave me a brief glimpse of a red, expressionless face, framed in a close-fitting linen cap, and

of two eyes that looked out unseeing at the world. I stared a moment in rather awed wonder and, turning, kissed my mother.

Upon descending to the sitting-room I found Friend David with my father, my uncle and Cocky, drawn up about the fire and engaged in serious discussion. My father, who looked older and grayer, and showed new lines in his face, greeted me with his rare smile and pinched my cheek when he kissed me on the forehead. But for the kiss it was as if I had returned from a short visit to my grandmother; for it was ever a point of conscience with him to suppress all outward show of emotion.

"So thee thinks," said he, continuing the conversation interrupted by my entrance, "this man must be the shipwrecked sailor thee picked up?"

"Sartin sure it's him," replied Cocky.

"The dispatch says nothing of any Portuguese. It reads: 'Ship Wanderer, Kimball commanding, entered harbor this morning. No boy aboard.' I have sent Friend Gifford thither to look into the matter and to take charge. A day or two ago it seemed as if I were to lose all my cherished possessions. Then yesterday came this news, and to-day — " His eyes as he spoke these last words sought me out; but it was as if they looked through me to something beyond.

One morning a few days later I awoke early, and looking out my little attic window saw the familiar shape of the Wanderer at her mooring in the Pool.

I dressed hastily, snatched a hurried breakfast in the kitchen, and was just about to rush out of the house and across the fields to investigate the recent arrival when from the other side of the sitting-room door there fell upon my ears the sound of a well-known voice. I opened the door and entered. There, tall and lank, with hatchet face and piercing eyes, sat Abner Kimball, the centre of a group about the fire. From the high-flown expressions he was using I knew that he was not yet warmed to his discourse.

". . . diskivered the floatin' contrivance I had constructed," he was saying, "an' likewise the articles of apparel reposin' on it, whar I had secured 'em, they was all consider'ble obfusticated, so to speak. Some on 'em was disposed to formulate the conclusion that the cap'n here an' the boy yonder was both drownded: which was precisely the conclusion I intended they should formulate. Others agin — waal, they didn't actchuly know nothin', but they jest kind o' suspicioned. Anyhow, they all got their heads together an' commenced chatterin' an' makin' crazy motions with their hands, same's they allays do when they 'low they're discussin' or argyfyin'. At last they come to the conclusion that to make assurance doubly sure, they'd up an' burn the brig. O' course, not knowing their lingo, I didn't know jest what they was up to till next mornin'. But I knowed it was some deviltry. So I picked out one word they was sayin', an' larned it the best I could make out. That thar was the one I sent up to you by the boy. Did ye git to make anythin' out of it, Cap'n?"

"Waal, Abner, we come pooty nigh to it. We knowed it must either mean 'burn,' or else one or two other things. We was like you; couldn't tell exackly which it meant till next mornin'."

"Ye done good, Cap'n, seein' what an onhandy, gibble-gabble of a langwidge them pore benighted Portugees speak. Ye done good. But how ye kept yerselves from bein' roasted alive, beats all. I 'lowed ye'd be sure to climb up the cliff or jump into the sea, when them flames riz' up roarin' among the ol' brig's top-hamper. They was all a-waitin' to see ye do it, with muskets in their hands. So when I see the boy peepin' out at us from between the rocks, I let fly with my gun at the other side o' the cliff, to distract their attention, and sure enough they all follered my example like a flock o' geese a-follerin' the gander. Why, they made me deef, the pore idiots!

"Waal, when it was all over, we rowed back to the ship as downhearted a crew as ever I want to see: me, because I thought ye was both roasted to a crisp; an' them, because they wan't ever a glint o' gold or silver to be found in the ashes o' that brig.

"Next thing was they all got powerful scairt. Here they was in a ship they'd stole, an' the cap'n an' the boy unaccounted fur. The sarcunstantial evidence p'inted straight to piracy an' murder, an' the pore cusses knowed it. Their on'y idee was to git quit o' the ship as soon as they could. So they planned to run fur the nearest coast, pick out a handy place where it could be did safe, an' beach

her. Then they'd set her afire an' scatter. Worst of it was they looked to me to work out their position an' lay a course fur 'em. I had to admit the idee was a good one from their p'int o' view. But I knowed what acksessory after the fact meant; an' that was somethin' I 'lowed I'd keep cl'ar of. So when they came to me, an' laid their plan afore me, an' begged me to help 'em out with it, I says no. Their idee, I says, ain't got the fust elemants of common sense to it, I says. Contrariwise, I told 'em, ef they'd leave the hull business to me, I'd take 'em through all stan'in'. O' course that led to a sight more o' chatterin' and gesticulatin'; an' they wan't all takin' kindly to my way o' thinkin', as I could see from the black looks an' fist-shakin's that was aimed my way. But I stood my ground, an' it wan't long afore they all seed that I had the wind on 'em. So I'll be durned ef they didn't all give in, put the hull business in my hands, an' elected me cap'n unanimous.

"My fust consarn, bein' of a humanitarian disposition, was to presarve them pore, misguided Portugees from the consequences of their ignorant vi'lation of the law. My second, havin' due consideration fur the rights o' property, was to restore the vessel they had hypothecated to her legitimate owner. To some individuals these two projects mought seem incompatible. But by bringin' to b'ar on the problem that divine endowment o' mankind, the reasonin' faculty, I eventually arrived at a satisfactory solution. There wan't no sense in puttin' in at a Brazil

port, nor at the Cape Verdes, the Canaries, Madeiry, nor yet the Azores; fur the reason that the port officials in all them localities had most likely be'n warned an' was on the lookout fur us. Was I c'rect, Mr. Slocum?"

My father nodded.

"Accordin'ly, I argued, the safest port to make fur was fust, one whar she wan't knowed; an' second, whar no one but an idiot would expect the Portugees to take her. That meant most any port along the New England coast exceptin' New Bedford.

"So I laid a course that 'ud 'a' brought her up somewhar no'th o' Cape Cod; an' I cal'late I'd 'a' made port three or four weeks ago, ef them Portugees hadn't be'n so jumpy in their nerves. Every blessed time we'd sight a sail er a smudge o' smoke on the horizon the hull crew 'ud come highstrikin' aft; an' I'd be gosh-walloped ef they'd quit throwin' cat-fits till I changed the course.

"I cal'late ye'll be consider'ble amused, Cap'n, when ye come to overhaul my log an' charts. Why, the course I made was like the tracks of a fly that's be'n half drownded in the ink bottle an' can't make up his mind which way he wants to navigate. Waal, we come curleycuin' an' zigzaggin' up through the No'th Atlantic, till we run kerplunk into the golldarnedest triplex hell-twister of a storm that I ever see, and I've follered the sea forty year. Bad as it was we come through it all right, fur that thar hooker's got all-fired good stuff in her, an' honest workmanship besides. We was mebbe kind o' devas-

tated aloft, an' the galley consider'ble smashed up, through the stove breakin' loose from her moorin's. But her hull was sound as a barrel an' light as a cork.

"Next day at noon my observation showed we wan't much more'n three hunnerd mile south o' Long Island. Then, as luck would have it, the wind slewed round to the sou'west, which was favorable fur a quick run down the coast to Boston. She sartin sure exhibited fine travelin' qualities that trip — four hunnerd and ninety-five mile, accordin' to dead reckonin', in less than fifty-eight hours. An' not a brace nor a sheet touched, nuther, till we was off Provincetown. We had luck another way, too. Sightin' a sail or a smudge o' smoke then, with the smell o' land in their noses, would shore 'a' spelled mutiny; but fur the hull o' that four hunnerd an' ninety-five mile we didn't sight either the one or the other — an' most o' the time right in the track o' the clipper packets at that!

" 'Twas dusk when we hove to off City Island, an' the sea wan't much more rugged than the river yonder. Come dark I says to them Portugees — scairt stiff, they was, pore critters — 'Boys,' says I, 'ye lower away your own boat an' scatter.' I knowed they'd brought out one o' them whaleboats from the Azores. Mebbe they'd stole it, an' agin mebbe they hadn't. Anyhow, I give them the benefit o' the doubt, an' the pore misguided furriners got cl'ar off afore anyone knowed they was anywhar round."

"D'ye mean to tell me," roared Captain Gifford,

"that ye deliberately aided an' abetted the escape from justice of that lousy crew of pirates?"

Abner drew himself up until he towered high above the irate little captain and, tilting up his bearded chin, glared at him with blazing eyes.

" 'Vengeance is mine,' " he thundered, " 'I will repay, saith the Lord.' "

"Damn it, sir," retorted the captain, "that ain't — "

My father's hand on his shoulder checked his outburst of indignation.

"Friend Gifford," he said, speaking with his usual quiet dignity, "I am afraid thee is forgetting thyself. This is not the deck of thy ship, neither is this man one of thy sailors. It seems to me that he has done well, and his quotation from the Good Book is quite to the point. Just as, by the help of God, our boy has been restored to us, even so, and by the same Almighty Power, has Friend Kimball restored to us our stolen vessel. What would it profit us to throw these wretched men into prison? Thee knows well I would not prosecute them. Let them go their ways; they are in God's hands."

Abner turned to face my father and looked long and earnestly into his face. Then stretching out his arm, he grasped him by the hand.

"Friend Slocum," he said in his finest oratorical manner, "I am proud, sir, to take ye by the hand. In the course of my life I have met many Quakers. But you, sir, are the first I have ever encountered that measured up squar' an' true to the title — Friend."

XXIV

DOUBLOONS AND PISTOLES

My father was both cheered and encouraged by the recovery of his ship. To his surprise she was found to have sustained but little damage as a result of her piratical voyage. What little repairing and refitting there was to be done he rather welcomed as affording an opportunity for the employment of the carpenters and riggers thrown out of work by the fire. As soon as she was ready again for sea, my father proposed to put a cargo of general merchandise aboard her, and send her under command of Captain Gifford to the West Indies. In this way he hoped in the course of a few months to secure enough ready money to begin the rebuilding of the house and yards. In the meantime my uncle had returned to Norfolk to take charge of his ship, in which he intended to sail back to New Bedford.

It seemed strange to me that after all my adventures and after all the changes in my home life, we so soon dropped back into the same old routine, and it was as if the most of what I have here related had never happened. I returned to school at once, taking up my studies at the very point where I had dropped them in the spring. In the eyes of my companions I had become a hero. I do not recall that I took

undue toll of their credulity in the telling of my tale, but I would not have been a boy had I not meted out a goodly measure of brave deeds to swell my own share of the credit. In like manner I was careful either to draw a veil over my unheroic moments or to varnish them until they shone with a borrowed glory. Thus it came to pass that for years after I was regarded as an adventurous spirit, a dare-devil, with how little truth you who read these pages have already learned. So easily is great repute often earned.

The absence of the work and bustle in the yards in these days left me with little to interest me outside my school life. There was, to be sure, for a few weeks, the work on the Wanderer. But when that was done, and she had sailed away on her first legitimate venture, I felt lost indeed. In those days Cocky was a man of one idea.

"What's this nonsense about takin' a cargo to West Injy?" he would ask me, "when they's a cargo o' gold an' silver to be had fur nuthin', a day or two further south? Put a crew o' good, honest, Cape Cod seamen — "

"Hold on thar, Cap'n," interrupted Abner, "I ain't a-goin' to submit to no disparagin' remarks about the Portugee race. They may be a mite deeficient as fur's eddication is consarned, but — "

"Who's a-sayin' anythin' agin yer pesky Portugees? I know all about 'em, an' so does Bill here — all we wants to know, too. They're good sailors, I don't deny it, Abner. But fur this here v'yage I'd

pick my crew from Cape Cod or mebbe Nantucket. An' I'd be durn keerful who I chose from those parts."

"When was you cal'latin' to h'ist anchor, Cap'n Ellwood?" enquired Abner sarcastically.

Cocky ignored the question.

"I'd heave to off the rock, same's I did it a while back. Then I'd order two boats put overside, an' man 'em with picked men."

"This ain't no v'yage," said Abner. "I'd call it a picnic." He cackled at this mild pun, but Cocky was not to be diverted.

"In one," he continued, "I'd put the spars, rope, an' block an' tackle to rig the same kind of a contraption the Britishers used. In the other would go Cap'n Lee, an' Abner — "

"No siree!" Abner objected; "no more small-boat picnics fur me so long's I have the strength to resist. Count me out of it, Cap'n."

"Waal, then we'll say Bill here, an' two or three ree-sponsible, close-mouthed Yankees."

"What'd you be doin', Cap'n? Mindin' ship?"

"No, sir, Abner; I'd be in that thar fust boat to show 'em the landin' place, an' to guide 'em to the right spot on the clift fur to drop down the rope. An' when I'd seen them spars an' everythin' rigged shipshape, I'd have 'em drop me onto the ledge."

"What fur?"

"Why, to make the line fast to the cases, an' to give the word when to h'ist an' when to lower away. The other boat 'ud be layin' in close under the foot

o' the clift to ketch the cases as they come down. The hull thing 'ud be easy as pie."

"Yawss," sniffed Abner, "till the crew diskivvered what sort o' stuff you was loadin'."

"They wouldn't," replied Cocky; "why, them cases'll be so crusted up with guano that they'll smell up the hull ship. Look at the way it stuck to Bill and me. The sailors could smell it on us all through the v'yage home; we could smell it ourselves, even. An' when the crew smells them cases they'll 'low we're loadin' suthin' goll-durn ch'ice in the line o' fertilizer."

"Mebbe so, Cap'n, mebbe so."

Cocky's picture of the salvage of the treasure was so alluring that the thought of it was never long out of my mind. My father's loss and his evident need of ready money made me eager to help him; and this plan seemed the easiest and the quickest way to do it. However, my recent encounter with the sea in its sterner, crueler moods was still too fresh in my mind for me to welcome the prospect of another long voyage. Indeed I should have been glad of an excuse to postpone the venture to a milder season of the year, had I not known how pressing the need was. So I had resolved to pluck up my courage and to broach the project to my uncle immediately upon his return from Norfolk. He had already written reporting his safe arrival, and the satisfactory progress of the work on his ship. He proposed, he said, very shortly to ship a crew and make the trip home in ballast.

It was upon a night not very long after our receipt of this letter that I had a very vivid dream of my life upon the ledge. There was nothing singular about this, for my thoughts, sleeping as well as waking, often harked back to the ledge, the cave, and its precious contents. But this dream was so vivid that even after I awoke and sat up in my bed with my eyes open, the sense of being there upon that rocky wall high above the sea still persisted. Then quite suddenly I realized why it was I felt so: the air I was breathing was pungent with guano! At first I thought I had merely imagined it, or that it was only the aftermath of my dream. I rose, lifted the window and, sniffing the outside air, found the odor stronger than ever. There was something going on, too, in the yard below. I saw the flickering light of a lantern on the snow, and heard the sound of men moving about and the low murmur of their voices. For a long time I watched and listened, wondering if they were thieves come to rob the house. Then at last the light vanished, and there was silence.

When I went down to breakfast the next morning, I found my uncle at the table before me. He had returned in the night, and for some reason was in the best of spirits. Friend David entered the room with me.

"A most peculiar odor," he remarked, after he had greeted my uncle. "Has thee noticed it especially, William?"

My uncle glanced at my father and smiled.

"I'm sorry, Friend David," said he, "that thee

finds it annoying. It is a part of my cargo which I have put in thy cellar for safe-keeping."

"I do not find it annoying," declared the older man politely, "but it is very singular, very singular indeed."

After breakfast Cocky and Abner appeared, having evidently been summoned. They, too, sniffed the air, and looked at one another with a puzzled expression on their faces. Then lanterns were lighted and we all descended the stairs to the cellar. I believe there had been a half-suspicion of the truth in my mind from the moment I awoke in the night. But for all that I was no less astonished than the others when there on the cellar floor in the light of the flickering lanterns I beheld the forty small cases of treasure, the spoil of the slaver!

"Jumpin' Jehoshaphat!" cried Cocky. "I 'lowed I smelled suthin' durn familiar, soon's ever I come up on the stoop."

"Strange you didn't smell it when it was under your nose aboard my vessel," said my uncle.

"Gosh A'mighty, so I did. But I 'lowed we'd lived with the stench so long, me an' Bill, that it had soaked into our skins. So that's whar the smell come from, hey? An' ye had the stuff towed safe under hatches all the time! Now I wanta know."

"I kept the business close as I could; had to, I guess. Most of the crew think to this day that the stuff's fertilizer. The rest of 'em — they that had the handling of the cases — think it's part of the cargo of hardware salvaged from the old Barrows.

Of course I had to deny the men shore leave at the islands, or the news would have got about that we'd touched at the Rock, and taken something off. If that had gotten out, the natives would have swarmed about my vessel like angry hornets."

All that morning we worked, knocking the tops off the cases and shoveling the coin or the bars into the sacks of sailcloth my uncle had had made for the purpose. When the last case had been emptied, Cocky and Abner carried the unsavory collection of boxes out into the yard, where they were promptly burned. Then through the afternoon and evening the five of us labored and sweated in the task of moving nearly two tons of precious metal from the cellar floor to the room my father used as an office.

The whole of the following day was consumed in the counting, weighing, and estimating the value of the treasure. It was a tedious process which I soon tired of watching. So after enduring about an hour of it, I ran off to join Cocky and Abner aboard the Wanderer.

"How much is they?" enquired the former.

"It isn't all counted yet. Only eight bags."

"Jee-mima! An' we filled seventy of 'em! That thar's a consider'ble sum o' money, I cal'late."

And so it was. That evening after supper we made a half circle about the sitting-room fire with my uncle standing facing us on the hearth rug. In his hand he held a piece of paper all covered with figures.

"In the first place," he began, "I have to confess that the yarn I told some of you about the loss of the old Barrows was not altogether true. My reason for concealing a part of the truth will become clear to you as I proceed with my statement. As a matter of fact, when the poor old Barrows struck that reef, she struck it hard, so hard, indeed, that she broke her back and tore a great hole in her bottom. For when the next heavy sea lifted her, she parted amidships and the two halves slipped off into deep water and foundered. It was all over in even less time than it has taken me to tell it. In one moment I saw the great sea rolling in under her quarter, and yelled, 'Hold fast!' In the next we were all wallowing in the flood. By the mercy of God, rather than by any efforts of our own, four of us got clear of the sinking wreck, and clinging to spars or planks, were finally thrown up on the shore. The shore was the Rock of St. Paul, and but for the rift in the cliff and the old brig that lay there, we would have perished at the foot of those inhospitable crags."

"It was you, then," said I, "that shifted the treasure."

"I and my three companions. We hoisted it, case after case, to the cave in the cliff where you found it. The cave, too, once we had scraped away the guano and chased away the gulls, was the place we lived in when we were not working aboard that foul brig. Had it not been for a couple of casks of food that came ashore from the wreck, and the trickle of cold water aloft in the cave, there'd have been no

heart in us for all that filthy work of shifting and hiding the treasure.

"The rest of my tale is much as I told it at first. When at last I alone out of the three got safe home, I planned to fit out a ship for the purpose of salvaging that treasure. However, as treasure-hunting is well-known to be a ticklish business, and particularly so in this case with some of the slaver's crew probably at large, I thought it wise to give out that yarn about saving the cargo of the Barrows, which was in truth logwood and coffee, with no bar copper or precious metals. But the rascals got ahead of me after all; though, to be sure, I had the satisfaction of knowing they had small chance of lighting on my hiding-place.

"When we found the Wanderer gone, I pressed the preparations forward, and within a week was on your track across the Atlantic. I made the mistake of calling at the Azores; if I had taken a direct course to the Rock, you would have found me there waiting for you. However, I at least had the satisfaction of hearing word of you there, learning that a large ship, answering to my description of the Wanderer, had lain for a few days in a channel between two of the smaller islands; and that men, provisions and water had been put aboard her.

"From this information I inferred that the Portuguese — Cape Verde Islanders, they were — would have time to make the Rock, search for the treasure and get away, before I could get there. So I laid a course direct for the Cape Verdes, and finding no

trace of them there, cruised about in that vicinity for a week or more. Then I tried the Canaries, sailing about among the islands in hope of hearing some news of you. Finally I went to Madeira on the odd chance of learning something there. Then I started back to the Cape Verdes, but halfway there I lost patience and put her head straight for the Rock. If I'd gone direct from Madeira, I might have met the Ranger on her way north.

"Arrived at the Rock, we found the brig burned to the water's edge, and the cave accessible only from the top of the cliff. So we searched the island until we discovered on the other side a low point at which we could land, and from which we could make our way to the summit of the cliff just above the cave. When my men lowered me to the ledge, I was astounded to find my hiding-place discovered; and still more so to find that little if any of its contents had been removed. So without troubling myself further over the matter, I went to work hoisting out the cases and dropping them down to the boats stationed at the foot of the cliff."

"What did I tell ye?" cried Cocky triumphantly. "Wan't that jest the way I was plannin' to do the job myself?"

"Yawss, Cap'n, it was," responded Abner. "Great intellecks sagaciate in a similar manner."

"To the men who worked with me and in the boats," continued my uncle, "I kept up the fiction that the stuff was bar copper, with a case or two of guano thrown in to explain the smell. Luckily we

could handle all the cases with powerful tackle, for if they'd once hefted them, they'd have realized they were far too heavy to be copper. Before nightfall we had it all safely stowed in the after hold, and not a soul in the crew the wiser; nor were you, either."

He turned, smiling, to Cocky and me.

"We smelled suthin', though, Cap'n Lee," declared Cocky.

"Yes; but I'll be bound you didn't smell six hundred and seventy-nine thousand, two hundred and thirty-one dollars and eighty-five cents."

He read the figures off from the paper in his hand.

"Whew!" I whistled.

"Sufferin' Jehoshaphat!" whispered Cocky. Then he looked at me reproachfully. "But how about them eighty-five cents?" he asked. "Bill an' me, we figgered they wan't no small change in the lot."

"No more there was," said my uncle, smiling, "until we figured it out in American money. You can't change foreign coin into dollars without the chance of having some small change left over."

"Now, the question is," he went on, "how shall all this money be divided?"

We all looked at each other for a moment. Then Cocky spoke up.

"Cap'n Lee, that thar treasure is yourn. Ye found it an' had the gumption to hide it whar them pesky Portugees couldn't git it. 'Twas you went an' fotched the stuff an' brought it safe home. Ef ye was to keep the hull of it, we wouldn't none of us have a word to say. So my vote is to leave it to you

how much ye think it right to keep fur yerself, an' how much ye think it's fair to give to the rest of us."

To this plan we all gave such hearty consent that my uncle accepted it.

"For myself," he said, "I want but a moderate share. The value of the Barrows, and of her cargo, perhaps, and my pay on the voyage in search of the Wanderer. It might amount to sixty thousand dollars. I should like, too, to give the families of the three poor fellows who helped me hide the treasure a proper share in it — say ten thousand apiece. To Friend Slocum, as the owner of the vessel that salvaged it, should go one third of the whole amount. To Mr. Kimball, for salvage of the Wanderer, ten thousand, which is about what the courts would allow him. To Captain Ellwood for his pay, and in appreciation of his skill and tact in handling his ship under difficult circumstances, and of his excellent care of his owner's son, another ten thousand. To you, Will — now, honestly, my boy, what claim have you to a share in this money?"

"I don't want any," I said stoutly.

"Don't ye agree to no sech nonsense, Cap'n Lee," interposed Cocky. "That thar boy has airnt his share along with the rest of us. He done his best from fust to last. Why, it was him diskivvered the cave on the cliff; an' ef he hadn't, whar'd we be now? The Portugees 'ud 'a' ketched us an' cut our throats, an' Abner 'ud 'a' let 'em go jest the same. An' Bill he biled salt water till it was sweet, so's we didn't die o' thirst. He — he — why, Cap'n, that boy was

the brains o' the hull shebang, that's what he was. An' here you want to pass him over! Ef I airnt ten thousand dollars, he airnt fifteen, or mebbe twenty, I'll be goll-walloped ef he didn't."

"Well, we'll call his share ten thousand, too, then. That leaves a balance of three hundred and thirty-two thousand, eight hundred and twenty-one dollars and twenty-four cents. What shall we do with that?"

"Keep it yourself," proposed Cocky.

"I move you, sir," said Abner, standing very erect and throwing his head back so that his beard waggled as he spoke, "I move you that the balance of this fund be devoted to the promotion and confirmation of liberty, equality and fraternity throughout the world."

"I agree to that," said my uncle, "especially to the fraternity. But let us be a little more definite in our fraternal benevolence. My proposal is that we devote this wealth, which was gained in the slave trade, to the improvement of the condition of the slaves here in our own country."

"Good!" said Cocky. "I cal'late them niggers need improvin'!"

"Waal, I dunno," said Abner, shaking his head doubtfully. "Depend on how ye contemplate improvin' 'em. Ef it's by missionaries, I don't hold with missionaries. Ef it's by underground railways, or any o' them onlawful contrivances o' the onregenerate abolitionists, ye kin count me out. I'm a true-blue Democrat, an' always will be."

"We will do nothing," my uncle assured him, "that does not meet the approval of each and all of us."

"By the way, Cap'n," said Cocky, "beggin' yer pardon fur changin' the subject, does the wuth o' them di'monds go into that thar money?"

"What diamonds?" asked my uncle.

"D'ye mean to tell me ye didn't find the rum bottle half full o' di'monds?"

"No, I didn't — hold on, though! There was a rum bottle in that cask of provisions. Old Tom Skinner, I remember, picked it up and smelled it. 'Anything in it, Tom?' I asked him. 'Nuthin' on'y the smell,' he said, 'an' a handful o' pebbles.' And with that he heaved it overboard in disgust. What makes you think they were diamonds?"

"Why, I know they was di'monds. Lookee thar!"

He pulled from his pocket and held under my uncle's astonished eyes a heavy gold ring with a fine large diamond blazing from the dull setting.

"Thar!" he cried. "Thar's what ol' Tom Skinner hove overboard fur pebbles! Tom Skinner! Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! I'll skin *him* when I ketch him!"

XXV

WHERE THE CARGO WENT

My father's share in the slaver's treasure enabled him at once to rebuild his shipyards. Within a few months new shops and lofts sprang up from the ashes of the old. In April he laid down the keels of two new vessels; and the place once more knew the resounding blows of axe and adze and maul, the song of saw and plane, the aroma of sawdust and shavings, and the cheerful voices of contented laborers. That spring, too, saw the planting of a new orchard to replace the old trees blasted by the fire. Early in the summer the frame of our new house began to rise upon the old foundation; and before the snow flew we had moved into the new home amid the rejoicings of family and friends.

For a year or two it seemed as if all was to go on just as it had done in the old days. But we soon realized that it was not to be so. Although my father's business continued to support us in comfort and content to the end of his days, yet it gradually dwindled until in the end he was building nothing but the small, three-masted coasting schooners. For iron and steel and steam were coming into their own, steadily displacing wooden vessels as the freight carriers of the high seas. With the wooden hulls, the

tall, tapering masts, the intricate tracery of spars and rigging, the towering, cloudlike fabric of bellying sails, disappeared most of the poetry and romance which from the time that Homer sang, have clustered about ships and the men who have sailed them.

The house we rebuilt still stands with the sturdy orchard behind it; but the shops and lofts are gone, and upon the slope where the stocks once stood, the grass now grows smooth and green to the water's edge. Even the Pool is changed. The winter storms and the high spring tides have washed in sand and silt and mud, which nobody has found it worth his while to dredge out again. So that where once the snub-nosed, rugged whalers and the stately square-rigged merchantmen rode safely at any tide, a forty-foot pleasure-yacht now dares not venture.

The undivided balance of the slaver's treasure for three years lay untouched in my uncle's bank. Meanwhile Everett and Phillips and Beecher had brought the burning gospel of Abolition even to our remote corner of the Commonwealth, firing every heart with their eloquence. Not that we had never heard of Abolition before. For some time pulpit and press had been holding it up to us as a nefarious conspiracy for wholesale robbery, an abomination in the sight of God and man. But now these men had made a light to shine in the darkness, and in that light we saw slavery as a stain upon the soul of our nation, a crime that cried to God. To purge the land of it was now become our patriotic duty, our religion. It was the great awakening, when men stood forth

offering their wealth, their lives, their all to the holy cause.

One of the first converts among us, strangely enough, was Abner Kimball, who straightway became the most ardent of abolitionists. I myself, in the enthusiasm of youth, was not far behind him. It was our urgency, I believe, that finally won over our two more conservative trustees of the fund. Thus it came about that the ill-gotten wealth of the Cape Verde slavers, the blood-money paid down by evil men for the bodies of hundreds of ill-fated Africans, was now flung freely and generously into the coffers of the cause, to the end that under our glorious flag no man should dwell who was not free.